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EXTINCTION PARADE FROM WORLD WAR Z CREATOR
MAX BROOKS

BCM #4 Introduction by Rich Johnston

Where would we be without controversy? Orson Scott Card does/doesn't write *Superman*, Alex Summers does/doesn't say the "M-Word," Catwoman is/isn't sleeping with Batman and DC is/isn't killing off their most prominent black character, John Stewart. Lots of people are getting angry, some about fictional characters, some about real people.

Some people despair at the outrage, some see it as contrived, faked, generated by people who just like to be outraged, and enjoy the moral diatribes they can fill message boards with as a result. But for most, it shows they care. They care about this medium, this industry, and the people who fill it both real and fictional. Recently Grant Morrison said that those upset about the death of Damian Wayne should instead feel bad about the deaths of real children. I don't think it has to be an either/or. And Morrison meant for people to have real feelings about the fictional characters he created, he didn't write about the real children he refers to.

To quote from *Community*, "I can pick up this pencil and tell you its name is Steve, and go like this (BREAKS PENCIL) and a part of you dies, just a little bit on the inside."

So the next time you are involved in a flame war with some noob who insists on misspelling "Spider-Man," just step back, enjoy the moment, relish the outrage, then step back in and tear that mother freaking constable a new one.

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LIFE IN THE GUTTERS

By Rich Johnston

Photo by Alex Erde

There has been all sorts of fuss over the announcement, then retraction that Orson Scott Card was to write a Superman story for DC Comics. After the initial protests, and subsequent withdrawal by artist Chris Sprouse from the project, I was told by a senior DC source that they were in "no hurry" to find a replacement artist. Which means DC can bury the story without actually appearing to kowtow to petitions.

And while Orson Scott Card's membership of an activist body fighting against gay marriage is a rather extreme one, it is indicative of all sorts of... interesting beliefs held by all sorts of people in the comics industry. Most are usually a little more on the harmless side.

Neal Adams, legendary comics creator who reshaped the very industry, also wants to reshape the way we think about the universe. He believes that matter increases in size over time and an increasing planet Earth explains the movement and shapes of continents. And he's created videos and everything explaining the theory in intricate detail, on YouTube. Search for them!

However, his old protégée, Mike Netzer, believes that he is the Son of God, the new Messiah, but in a comic book context. And he believes that he will launch an appreciation of comic books to the world when his time has come.

Dave Sim is a celibate proponent of a variety of religious observations, including the prayer strictures of Islam, and who speaks out against what he sees as a feminist-homosexual axis of evil. However he insists that anyone who does business with him signs a contract stating that they do not believe he is misogynist.

Grant Morrison is a proponent of Chaos Magick and has tried to get his readership involved in sigil magic through the pages of *The Invisibles*. At one point he talked about being abducted by aliens, at another

Photo by Jason Mouratides

he tried to make the very continuity of the DC Universe into a sentient entity, and he encouraged *Invisibles* readers to increase sales of the comic through a magic spell powered by masturbation.

Photo by Nikki Tysoe

Alan Moore worships Roman snake god, Glycon. It is a deity revealed as a very literal sock puppet in the 2nd century and discredited as a fraudulent, fictional religion. Which is probably why Moore subscribes to it. It may be a way for him to create new fictions. A self-announced magician at the age of forty, he's continued to conduct a variety of ceremonies to generate ideas.

Cat Yronwode used to co-publish Eclipse Comics, including Alan Moore's *Miracleman*, is a proponent of folk magic, such as hoodoo and runs the website luckymojo.com.

Steve Ditko, co-creator of Spider-Man and Doctor Strange, developed beliefs and an attitude to life in line with the thinking of Ayn Rand. He found Objectivism was directly against the "feet of clay" model of the Marvel superheroes he was writing and drawing. After walking off book after book, he eventually created the likes of Mr A, the ultimate personification of those beliefs of good against evil and nothing to get in the way of fulfilling Objectivist justice.

Rick Veitch, as well as a lucid dreamer, is also a Truther. He wrote and drew a 9/11 tenth anniversary comic for Image Comics that was rather blatant in the belief expressed that the US government plotted to blow up the World Trade Center by planting explosives.

Photo by Christian Chirita

Got a tip for Rich? You can contact him, or any Bleeding Cool contributor, with story tips, comments, questions, or to ask about advertising at: ***BleedingCool.com/contact***

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THE WORLD'S WORST SUPER HERO TEAM
QUANTUM AND WOODY!
#1 | ON SALE JULY 10
WRITTEN BY
JAMES ASMUS
ART BY
TOM FOWLER
VALIANT
andrew robinson 2013
© & TM 2013 VALIANT ENTERTAINMENT INC.

NEXT GENERATION:

John Byrne in IDW's Modern Age

By *Keith Davidsen*

NEXT GENERATION:
JOHN BYRNE IN IDW'S MODERN AGE
by Keith Davidsen

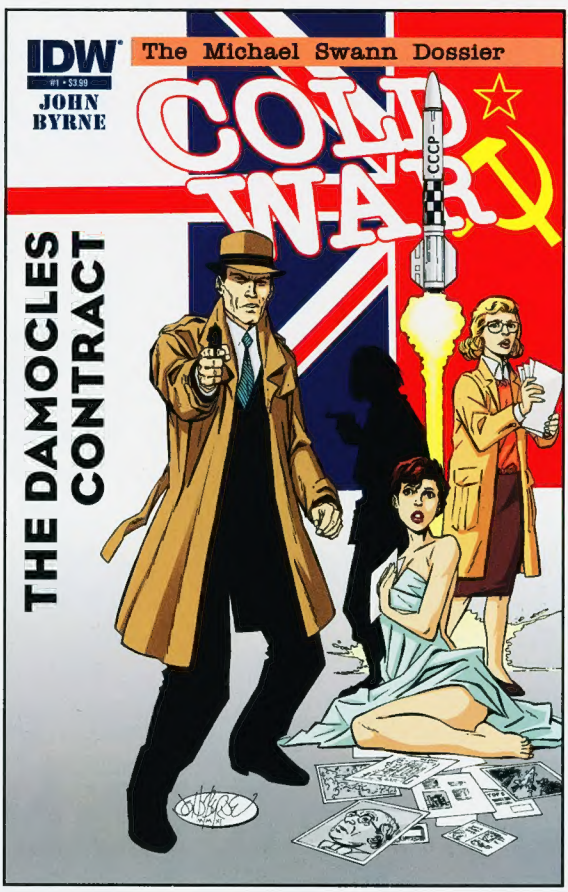
John Byrne is an industry icon, a pioneer whose historic runs on superhero comics cemented his place as a master storyteller with a legion of comic fans. But in recent years, he's built a considerable body of work at the fresh, next-generation publishing giant IDW. What is Byrne's appeal to audiences new and old, and where does his IDW work fit into the overall span of his career?

MAINSTREAM HEROES AND INDEPENDENT SPIRIT

John Byrne's rise to four-color stardom began with his acclaimed three-year tour of duty as illustrator of *Uncanny X-Men* in 1977, and everything he touched over the next two decades was unquestionably golden. Most comic fans would consider his run on *Fantastic Four* to be one of the defining depictions of Marvel's First Family. His back-to-basics reboot of the Superman mythos with *Man of Steel* drew nationwide attention and mainstream coverage in *Time* and the *New York Times*.

Chris Ryall, CCO and Editor-in-Chief of IDW Publishing, reflects what many of us felt about Byrne as a classic comic creator. "When I was a kid, reading his early Marvel work – even then, when I barely knew the difference between the artists, his stuff immediately stood out to me as just the exact look and feel I wanted in a superhero comic." Byrne took familiar concepts, distilled them to their purest forms, and then heralded us on new adventures where no one dared tread before. And we loved it.

Proven as a storyteller with a flair for accessible, thought-provoking content, he was invited to tackle more projects at Marvel Comics... and in each successive series,

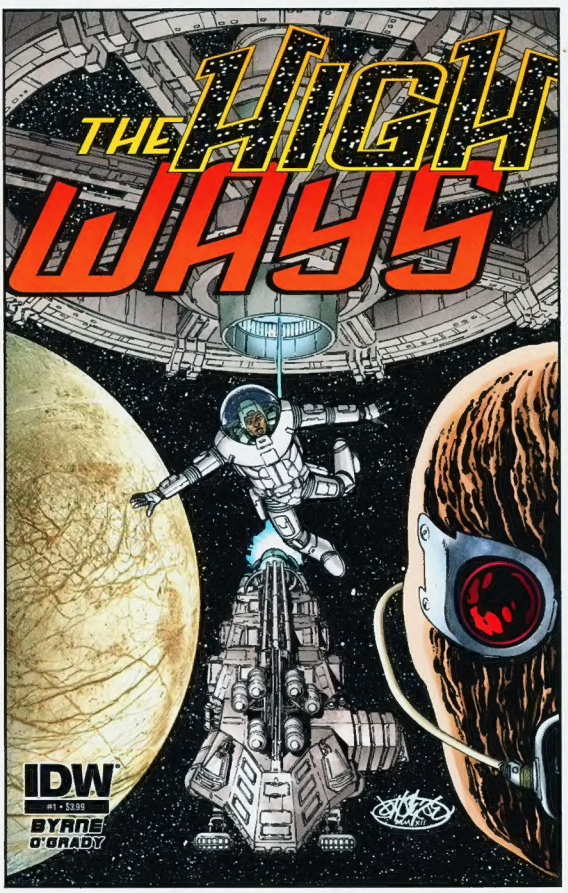


his independent spirit grew stronger. Who could have foreseen the savage and brutish Jennifer Walters reinvented in *Sensational She-Hulk* as a glamorous comedienne with a penchant for breaking the Fourth Wall and threatening your X-Men comics? Or the brooding Namor the Sub-Mariner donning business attire and fighting pollution as the head of Oracle, Inc., a multinational corporation? Forget the marquee names – give John Byrne the *Alpha Flights* and *Great Lakes Avengers* and *New Universes*, and his mad experiments would spawn the most delightful creations.

In time, Byrne would further explore his indie side at Dark Horse Comics' Legend imprint, where he launched creator-owned projects like *Babe, Danger Unlimited*, and the acclaimed *Next Men* (which we'll revisit shortly). He hadn't left the mainstream heroes behind, however – but his contributions were even more offbeat (one might say, Byrnesque) than ever before. Weird tales from Marvel's past, like *X-Men: The Hidden Years* and *Marvel: The Lost Generation*. Alternate realities like *Superman & Batman: Generations*, and reboot titles like *Spider-Man: Chapter One*. Bold takes on lesser-known classics like *The Demon*, *The All-New Atom*, and *Doom Patrol*.

BUILDING A BRAND AT IDEA & DESIGN WORKS

In 2008, IDW Publishing first welcomed John Byrne to their enterprise in the six-issue comic book series *FX*, a fan-commissioned project. IDW, fast on its way to becoming one of the industry's leaders in licensed properties, had lots to offer. Star Trek, the sci-fi staple rejuvenated by its blockbuster film, became a home for Byrne's far-reaching imagination; seven miniseries would follow, substantially building IDW's Star Trek library. The iconic writer/artist



would also work on blockbuster film offshoot *Jurassic Park: The Devils in the Desert,* and establish in-roads to the hard-core Whedonverse fan base via the *Angel: Blood & Trenches* miniseries. Byrne's professionalism lends perfectly to the rigors of monthly licensed comics publication, as Ryall attests, "Even now, nearing forty years in the business, he's still turning out two pages a day and working more consistently ahead of deadlines than anyone I've ever worked with."

But licensed projects at IDW were just the start. "From my mind, he did his superhero work and it was great," says Ryall. "Now he's moved into a time of doing his own thing, trying different styles and genres and titles, and each of those titles brings with it something new and unexpected." IDW announced in 2010 the return of John Byrne's *Next Men,* the fan-favorite series that had been left with a cliffhanger ending fifteen years previous. Furthermore, the indie-friendly publishing house would essentially create a sandbox for Byrne to play in, with such projects as...

- *Cold War,* a tale of intrigue and espionage that introduces MI-6 agent Michael Swann, a man called upon to stop a defecting British scientist from granting the Soviets complete nuclear dominion over the free world.
- *Trio,* a superhero series that recaptures the glory of a bygone four-color era – complete with the "ZAP! POW!" sound effects! Though the heroes' code names may be simply One, Two, and Three, the world at large knows them as Rock, Paper, and Scissors.
- In *The High Ways,* humanity has not yet reached for the stars, but the solar system is still a busy, exciting, and sometimes very dangerous place, as young Eddie Wallace discovers when he joins the crew of a freighter on the High Ways.

MOSAIC
MY NAME IS JASMINE. THAT MUCH I REMEMBER.
BUT THE REST IS... BLANK.
I DON'T KNOW HOW I GOT HERE.
OR WHY I'M HERE.
OR EVEN WHERE "HERE" IS.
ALL I KNOW IS...

OH, YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER THAN TO BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU HEAR THERE!
MORE'N ONCE I'VE SEEN MY OWN DEATH ON THE NEWS!
AS YOU MAY NOTICE, THOSE REPORTS WERE PREMATURE!
A DAY IN THE DEATH

WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS

Back in January, IDW announced that the next epic tale to hatch from Byrne's mind would be *Doomsday.1*, a four-issue miniseries that follows seven doomed astronauts who – from the safety of the International Space Station, bear witness to Earth's destruction by a titanic solar flare. Scheduled to hit stores in May, the first issue follows its intrepid band as they make the fateful decision to return to the surface… and discover whatever horrors may lurk there.

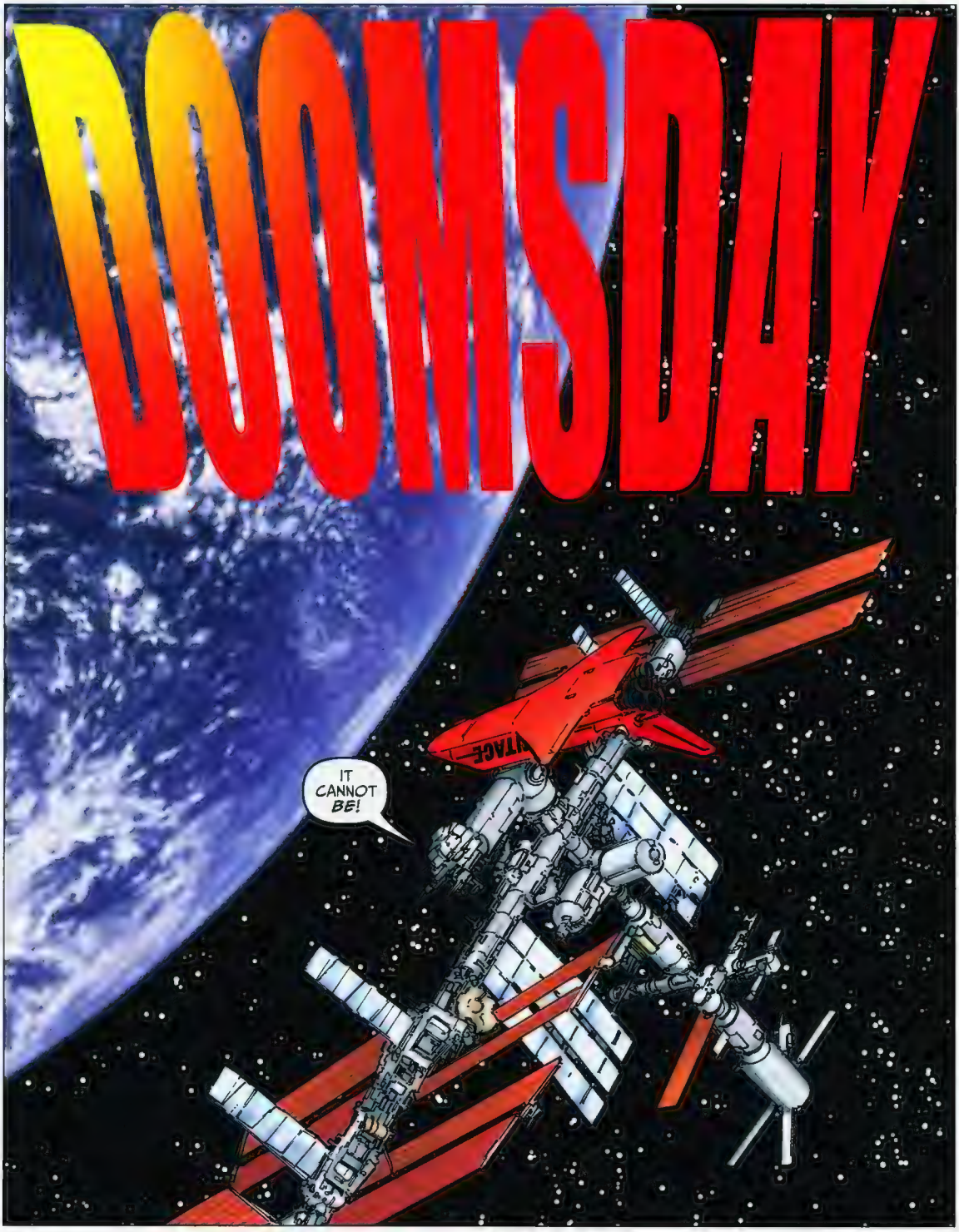
"*Doomsday.1* is a fun post-apocalyptic that doesn't play out the way many of these do," says Ryall, who speaks with authority, as IDW Publishing's line has included several world-ending scenarios (notably the massive *Infestation* mega-series). "If anything, it's probably based more in scientific possibility than most. A solar flare wipes out a good majority of the planet, and the survivors' paths take very unexpected turns as the story goes on. It's a sci-fi tale that's also very grounded and Earth-bound, even if that earth is now more of a charred mess than it was."

Byrne explores themes common throughout his works, concepts familiar to those indoctrinated in his expansive comics history… and literary theory, as well. "This one certainly hits the classics," says Ryall. "Man vs. Nature (nature is definitely winning), Man vs. Man… but mostly, it's the kind of comic book story that John Byrne knows how to tell: good people fighting against great odds and various forms of evil. The players and settings may change, but that's ultimately what drives a good comic-book adventure, and that's certainly the case here as well."

Ryall continues, "It's pretty damned topical, too. Depending on whom you talk to, everyone from NASA scientists to doomsday theorists to amateur

astronomers has talked about the fact that massive and disruptive solar flares are likely to hit us in the next year or five. So while the extreme result in *Doomsday.1* is probably pretty unlikely, it's at least in the ballpark of what's possible."

IDW has also announced at WonderCon that John Byrne will be working on a follow-up to his *Trio* creator-owned series, entitled *Triple Helix*. With so many new projects launched on an almost bi-annual basis through IDW, Byrne's well-deserved legion of fans have much thrilling new content to look forward to!



GORILLAS AND SUPER VILLAINS

Simon Spurrier & Mike Carey Talk Their New BOOM! Series

GORILLAS AND SUPER VILLAINS

Simon Spurrier & Mike Carey

Most people would be interested to hear what Mike Carey and Simon Spurrier, two fantastic talents in the comics field, have to say about their new projects in general. But when you find out that the books in particular are about a gun totin' gorilla and a world of super-powered criminals, you simply can't ask for anything more. *Bleeding Cool Magazine* caught up with the creators and found out a little more about *Six-Gun Gorilla*, *Suicide Risk*, and which BOOM! artists "give good gorilla."

MC Tell me a little about the book you're doing for BOOM. Is it a new departure for you?

SS This is going to be a slightly curious experience, I think. You have the dubious pleasure of being my first ever interviewee, but I wasn't even quick enough to get in the first question. Not a great start, Si, not a great start. Okay... the story's called *Six-Gun Gorilla*. And yeah, it's a pretty enormous departure.

The way I've taken to describing it (which doesn't do it justice - you know how it is with these daft little summary things) is that it's mostly a Western, partly a sci-fi, but not a sci-fi Western. Which is basically even more confusing than if I hadn't opened my mouth at all.

MC Hmm. And I'm writing a straight superhero story with a very slight sci-fi twist. You see how complicated you're making everything?

SS Exactly. So it's easier to tackle the obvious part: it's an epic, soul-searing Western revolving around a bloody enormous gorilla with a pair of even-more-bloody-enormous-guns. And it's loosely - very loosely - based on a long-forgotten 1930's pulp character of the same name.

All right, blurb over. Your turn. Gimme the top-end on your book.

MC Well, *Suicide Risk* is a story set against the backdrop of the first wave of superhero activations. Suddenly the world is seeing more and more super powered men and women popping up. The trouble is, the vast majority of them aren't heroes but villains - and even those who start out as heroes often don't stay that way for long. It's as though power corrupts, and superpowers

BFX
REFLECTIVE GLASSES/ GOGGLES TO PROTECT EYES FROM SUN & SAND/ DUST
BLUE SKINNY
BLUE IS SKINNY, MAYBE COAT IS TOO BIG?
ABSOLUTELY NO PADDING OR ARMOR, JUST STANDARD MILITARY GEAR
MOST BASIC OF THE BASIC
SAME DESIGN WITH A SLIMMER JACKET CUT?
STRAP FOR GLASSES
DONT WANT HIM TO LOOK HEROIC, JUST FRAIL, BUT STILL A SURVIVOR

corrupt absolutely. And the protagonist is a cop who's holding the line against these super powered bad guys - but then makes a fateful decision that puts him and his family very much in the line of fire.

SS All that sounds extremely cool. So here's a weird thought: based on your novels, your Vertigo work and the brief beery chats we've had in the past, you never really struck me as a "superhero guy." Even your Marvel work tended to revolve around themes far more complex than the usual two-tone spandexery. How does *Suicide Risk* sit amidst your genre preferences?

MC I like superheroes a lot, when they're done right. But I guess I like them best when they strike off at an angle from the mainstream. I loved Alan Moore's *Miracleman*, and Grant's tenure on *Doom Patrol*. *Suicide Risk* is sort of in that tradition, although I wouldn't presume to compare it to those two books. It sets up a world, but it holds back some crucial information about what's happening in that world. And then it unfolds by gradual reveals that it is something bigger than it seemed to be.

But that's true of your superhero work too, isn't it? And your novels, come to that. We both stray off the beaten path a little bit where we can. But I've seldom if ever done a genre fusion as weird as what you're describing in *Six-Gun Gorilla*. I'd like to pick you up on that word "soul-searing." Does it actually go to some dark places, or is it bravura fun?

SS No... at times it really does stray into some pretty heavy territory. And yeah - you're right - I do tend to get drawn to these uncomfortable-seeming fusions of genre and convention. In the context of my superhero work, that tends to be an opportunity to sling familiar tropes into unfamiliar territory (as with *Extermination*, the "Mad-Max-Meets-Spandex" book I did with BOOM! before *6GG*). But the luxury of familiarity is completely out the window with something like *Six-Gun*, which is both an opportunity and a curse. The original 1930 stories literally do simply revolve around a gorilla in the Old West. It's a ridiculous premise and people tend to react accordingly - "that's stupid!" - but then their expressions shift into a funny little smile as they realize they'd totally love to read it anyway. So I wanted to give mine that weird cognitive dissonance, but I wanted to do something more than just revisiting the old material and continuing it.

The solution which slowly presented itself was to lead the reader into Six-Gun Gorilla's world -- or a twisted version of it -- via a far more relatable character, and via a more relatable world. I could bore you silly with all the reasons I made certain decisions, but what it amounts to is this:

In the near future fiction has ceased to matter. Entertainment takes the form of tuning-in to the senses of volunteers who've undergone a particular surgical procedure. The folks at home can see what they see, hear what they hear, feel what they feel. And what the public enjoys feeling most of all is death. They're addicted to the thrill-rush that comes from being inside someone's head when they die. So most of these surgically-altered guys are suicidals or the terminally ill, who accept huge amounts of money (to leave to their families) in order to get sent into deadly situations.

Our central character is one such guy. Who gets sent into the middle of a very weird war zone, where he encounters - absolutely the last thing he expected - a 500lb ape. What follows is an exploration of fiction, frontier-life and survival - but all disguised as a head-explodin', wilderness-crossin', civil-warrin' Western.

The elevator pitch version goes: future man meets mythical gun-wielding ape in a Western setting. HILARITY AND CARNAGE ENSUES.

So - you mentioned your story takes place when a bunch of super-powers are "activating." Any sneaky hints on the how/why?

MC Well, there's a long answer and a short answer. We know that at least some of these people are buying their powers - and from a fairly unlikely and even banal source. Leo, our cop protagonist, tracks down a young couple who are literally doing on-the spot triage to see if people have superhero potential, and then

triggering their powers - with very weird tech - for cash down.

But of course that doesn't explain where the tech comes from, how these people came to have it, or what it actually does. Or for that matter, why it works for some people and fails to work for others. All of these things turn out to be important, and so do the side effects of having powers - which may not be side effects at all but something else entirely.

I love the way your story seems to comment on the whole reality TV trend and the even more degraded forms of entertainment it could lead to. Am I wrong, or is there going to be an element of satire or social commentary here?

SSHa, oh yeah. For instance, I had great fun writing these two good-ole'-boy pundit types enthusiastically describing the ongoing action of a bloody and wretched war zone. "Oh! Decapitation! Would you look at the adrenaline stats on that one! That's gotta be a contender for fatality-of-the-month, Bob..." and so on. But by far the majority of the book is far more concerned with the idea of The Western, and it structures itself as a Western accordingly - the pacing, the wide open space, the brief storms of violence. There's a very gentle hint of metafiction to it, but never in a wanky way. I just happen to be a massive fan of Westerns, with a shitload of theories about what it is that makes a Western great (hint: being set in the Wild West ain't it), and I wanted to do something a little bit crazy with my theories. Ultimately Westerns are way, way more about the creation of myths than they are about recognizable reality. Which (segue alert!) strikes me as being equally true of stories involving super-powers...

So here's one: how do you put yourself in the mind of characters who are so much more (or so much less) than human?

MC I think there are lots of different ways of doing that, but they all relate in one way or another to finding or maintaining the human dimension in these godlike characters. I mentioned Miricleman earlier. You remember how Mike Moran was actually jealous of his super-powered alter ego? There's that scene where he says to his wife: "When he loves you, it's pure and simple and magnificent. When I love you, it's all mixed up with twisted crap like whose turn it is to do the dishes." That was an amazing take on what it might be like to be Superman.

In *Suicide Risk*, what we do is show the terrible consequences of having powers - how the price, basically, is almost always your whole life up to that point. There's just this huge discontinuity, this break point, and when you come out on the far side of it you're changed. You could say that the change is the whole point of the story. The change, and the reasons for it. There's absolutely no wish fulfillment in this book. Nothing comes cheap, however enviable some of the supers may seem to be.

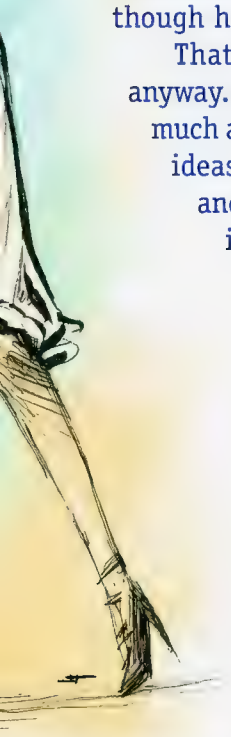
We were talking at one of the *Fabletown* panels about the idea that every genre is sort of a chapter in a social history - that their emergence and rise and fall has to do with how societies see themselves at any given time. Obviously the classic Western story comments on a particular window - a very narrow window - in American history, when the Westward expansion meant a continual moving frontier between the civilised and the wild. You're not writing a classic Western, obviously, but is there a sense in which you're using classic Western themes or tropes?

SS Yeah, absolutely. And you're bang-on about classic Westerns purporting to describe a very brief period in history. In fact, apropos what I was waffling about earlier, I'd argue "the West" as depicted in most Westerns never really existed at all: instead we've slowly created this glorious quasi-mythological history from stitched together movie clichés which has eclipsed the reality. Is the myth less valuable than the fact? I'd argue not, but that's probably a pub-conversation waiting to happen.

What I'm more confident about are the

core themes which make Westerns great. The central one, for me, is an idea of inbuilt obsolescence. Mythical or real, the West was defined by transition: the meeting of the old and the new. The death of the wilderness, savagery, lawlessness...the arrival of civilization, technology, politics. Again, you can argue all you want about whether one condition is better or worse than the other, but here's the trick: almost all the best Westerns feature a character who is "of" the old fighting for the new. A character fighting to create a new world, even though he/she/it has no place in it.

That's just one of my notions, anyway. But that sort of thing is very much at the heart of *6GG*. And these ideas even make literal appearances in the story. For instance, it turns out our central character "Blue," long before he hit rock bottom and decided to commit oh-so-public-suicide, worked in one of the last remaining libraries back on Earth, archiving old pulp material. So when he first encounters the gorilla he has the weirdest feeling of familiarity. So many layers of myth and meta!



But - and it's soooo critical to keep mentioning this, because otherwise people think I'm presenting some pretentious deconstructivist arthouse bollocks - the biggest, boldest and best reading of this new series is that it's a bloody good romp.

I haven't asked you much about your protagonist (sorry - my interview technique appears to consist of "waffle at length then scrabble to think of a question"). Given your thoughts on the curse/gift/curse of super powers, and the god-envy stuff we saw in *Miracleman*, how does your (everyman?) cop approach these uncanny bastards popping-up around him? And is his reaction to seeing superpowers how you imagine your own would be?

MC "A character fighting to create a new world, even though he/she/it has no place in it." That's a very resonant phrase. It immediately made me think of Moses getting close enough to the promised land to actually see it, but never being allowed to set foot in it.

I think Leo is close to despair when we first meet him. His best friend, who is also his partner in the force, gets a crippling injury in a super villain fight right at the start, and there seems to be nothing Leo can do about it. But he's not by nature the kind of man who can stop worrying at something just because it seems like a hopeless case. So he goes to the one super villain in this crew who he actually managed to arrest, and he has a conversation with him that shunts his life onto a different track.

All this is right at the start, and I think readers will see some of it coming. It's the consequences that are unexpected.

I take your point that the myth is as valuable as the reality. I like superhero stories best when they hit the mythic or at least the epic level - but the core storytelling devices in superhero stories are very familiar now. So to get any sense of real scale I think you've got to tear down and rebuild. That's very much what we're trying to do. In terms of who the supers are, and why they are, ultimately this is a different kind of superhero tale. There are still going to be wars of gods and titans going on, which I guess is part of the core of the genre, but then we pull back and there's a bigger conflict that doesn't become visible until your eyes adjust.

Okay, so tell me a bit more about your

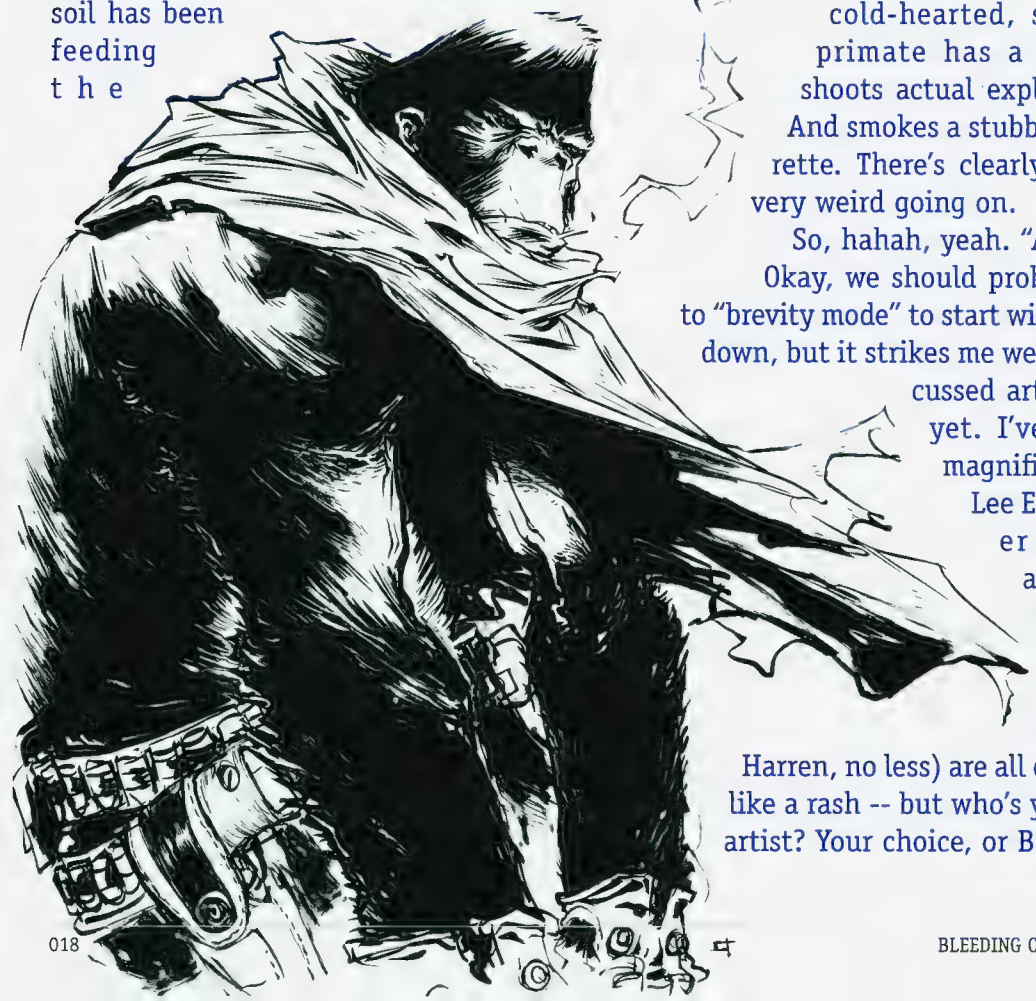
gorilla. He sounds atypical. Not that I've met many gorillas, but you know, what's he like? Is he a sympathetic character?

SHa. Now I desperately want one of the *6GG* covers to be an anatomical drawing of a gorilla holding a gun, marked simply "Atypical."

But yes, yes indeed, yes yes yes, he is atypical. The original pulp character (whose name was "O'Neil," for no obvious reason) was literally a silver-back gorilla whose kindly owner (who, naturally, had taught him to shoot a pistol) was killed by bandits. Cue revenge quest. Which is already about 8/10 on the atypicalometer.

My version is even stranger, but to get a better grasp on him you need to know a little something about the world he inhabits. For one thing, it's embroiled in a war of independence. It's essentially a human colony-world whose amazingly fertile soil has been feeding the people of Earth for years: now the colonists have risen-up to secede. *6GG* claims (yes, he talks... albeit really really quietly) to be the last member of an experimental squad sent from Earth to win the war, but was betrayed by his masters. So there's a bit of a "Rogue Trooper" thing going on. Although it's worth mentioning, his origin-story quickly starts to look suspect.

The other weird thing about this world is that - for reasons nobody understands - the laws of physics don't work quite right. There's no combustion and no electricity, so all the glorious technologies of the future are worthless. War is fought with clockwork or pneumatic guns and bio-engineered beasts of burden. It's a new frontier, which has been forced to adopt old (19th century!) techniques for survival. So: the West, by any other name. And yet, despite there being no combustion on this world, somehow this lumbering, cold-hearted, squint-eyed primate has a gun which shoots actual explodo bullets. And smokes a stubby little cigarette. There's clearly something very weird going on.



So, hahah, yeah. "Atypical." Okay, we should probably switch to "brevity mode" to start winding things down, but it strikes me we haven't discussed art and artists yet. I've seen that magnificent Tommy Lee Edwards teaser of yours, and my first *6GG* covers (by Ramon Perez and James Harren, no less) are all over the web like a rash -- but who's your interior artist? Your choice, or BOOM!'s?

MC It's Elena Casagrande, of *Hulk* and *Angel* fame - and she's doing wonders with this huge cast of exotic supers. The character designs are amazingly strong, and so are the visuals she's devising to get the powers across. It's a joy to look at, and very much its own unique thing.

So who have you got?

SS A very talented young chap named Jeff Stokely. He'd done some bits and bobs with Archaia when BOOM! found him. Frankly I was all fired-up with the mad tyrannical power which inevitably comes from owning a stake in the project, and was all prepared to use my veto. Unfortunately for my inner-tyrant, but fortunately for the project, Jeff was clearly the guy for the job from the outset. Euro-style dynamism, glorious action, perfectly expressive faces and - hey - the guy Gives Good Gorilla. He's going to be massive, I tell you.

Quickfire round! Best superhero flick ever made? (I'd go "Mystery Men", for my sins.)

MC Has to be *The Incredibles*.

SS (Oooh, good answer)

MC What about best Western? I totally love *Silverado*, cheesy though it may be...

SS I'd tend to go with *Once Upon A Time In The West* for sheer brilliance of pacing, but it's tough to beat *Unforgiven*.

Unrelated: it's also just occurred to me I never paid my respects for your work on *X-Men Legacy*. The "Age of X" event you set up - in which I played a very small role - led almost directly to me assuming the title these several years later. Feels very weird to be interviewing a mighty predecessor.

MC It's like a symbolic passing of the baton - only way, way late. I couldn't think of anyone better for the gig, Si. Hope you're enjoying it as much as I did...

SS Really, really am. (This is the part where - still smiling - you say "great, great... but if you hurt her... I'll kill you...").

All right. I guess we're wound-down. Anything you've been politely waiting for me to ask about which I singularly failed to do?

MC Nope, I'm good! How about you?

SS Yeah, I'm gorilla'd out.

THE ANNOTATED MUPPETS

By Brendon Connelly

I'm still excited that The Muppets will be back in our cinemas next March with *The Muppets... Again!*

This time around, Kermit is the star - which is just how I like it, thanks. The lead humans are Ricky Gervais, as Dominic, a sidekick to the master criminal - and Kermit lookalike - Constantine, Tina Fey as the lovestruck Gulag guard Nadya and Ty Burrell as an Interpol agent investigating a series of bold jewel thefts across Europe.

The film is still in production now, and we're probably months away from a trailer, but there's already been a lot of interesting little bits and pieces hidden in this first image from the film...

1: The cover of the newspaper shows the full train platform image which contains the newspaper... which will contain the image again, and that image will contain the newspaper... and so on. Trippy, man. **2:** The Muppets' luggage is covered in stickers from all sorts of destinations. It's pretty easy to make out the Paris sticker, with the Eiffel Tower standing in for the letter A. In *The Muppets... Again!* we'll see The Muppets take their stage show across the continent before they come to London for the big climax, where paparazzi pictures have already revealed that The Tower of London is going to play a very important role. **3:** Animal always looks like Ben Gunn to me. In *The Muppets... Again!* he's wearing his classic *Muppet Show* outfit. Animal has been compared to a lot of famous drummers over the years, but official Muppet lore is that he's the only member of the Electric Mayhem to not be based on anybody, or anybodies, in particular. **4:** Is this Kermit on the wanted poster, or is it Constantine, his evil doppelgänger? And whoever it is, what are they wanted for? While The Muppets tour Europe, Constantine and his sidekick Dominic are never far away... and that's not a coincidence. **5:** And here's the poster for The Muppets Grand Tour. No version of this photo is high-resolution enough to reveal the touring order, but you can make out a few details. Walter appears in a star on the far left, Gonzo is being fired out of a cannon in the top right, Statler and Waldorf are near the back, but behind even them is Crazy Harry. **6:** Piggy appears to be wearing an engagement ring, though she's

got one less finger than most brides to be, so it's hard to be sure. Word has leaked out, though, that there's a big wedding in the film... but when Kermit has an evil, criminal mastermind doppelgänger on the loose, don't be so sure that everything is as it seems. **7:** The film's European Tour storyline at least makes sense of Walter being separated from his brother, Gary, seeing as Jason Segel, who plays him, won't be appearing. Officially, Segel won't even make the tiniest of cameos in the film, but I will be surprised if Gary isn't mentioned somehow - even if it's just Walter sending a postcard home. **8:** Here's Foo Foo, Piggy's beloved pet. During production of *The Muppet Show* one trick was to replace Foo Foo with a doggy stunt double, only using an actual Muppet for close-ups and "hero shots." Foo Foo was notably absent from the last film; in interviews, Piggy said the pup was away, undergoing therapy for a strong aversion to Kermit. Crazy dog. **9:** *The Daily Muppet*'s masthead is based on that of *The Daily Mirror*, a British tabloid. *The Mirror* has promised various things under the title - "A Better Read. Guaranteed" is perhaps the most famous - while *The Daily Muppet* has gone for "Real Muppets. Unreal News." Note that The Newsman appears on the cover. I expect this picture was taken just seconds before something fell on his head. **10:** Disney issued two versions of this image. In one, director James Bobin was using the phone box to make a call. Here, we have Sweetums, who is not one of the most commonly seen Muppets but still one of the best loved, and tallest.

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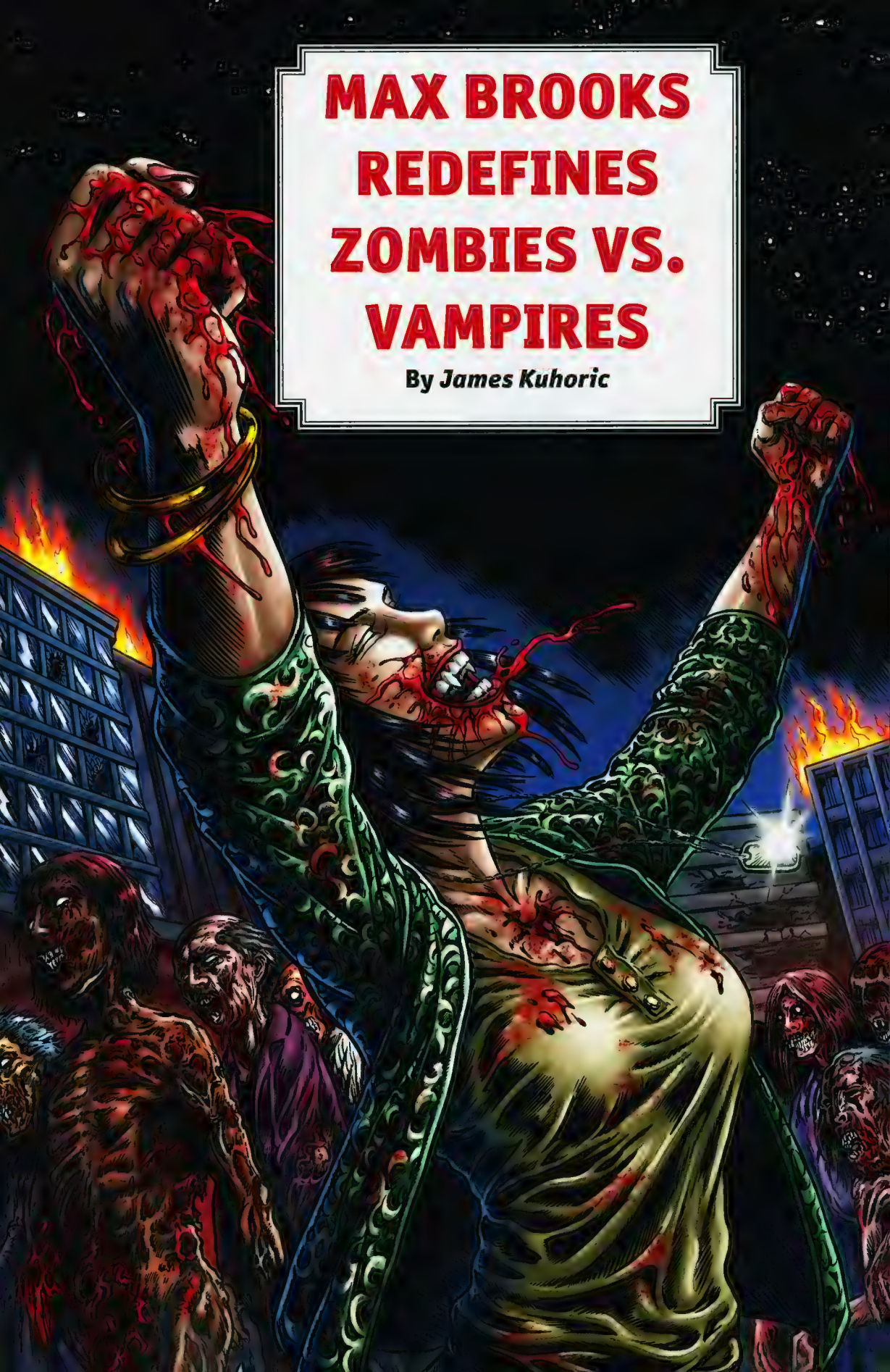
MAX BROOKS REDEFINES ZOMBIES VS. VAMPIRES
By James Kuhoric

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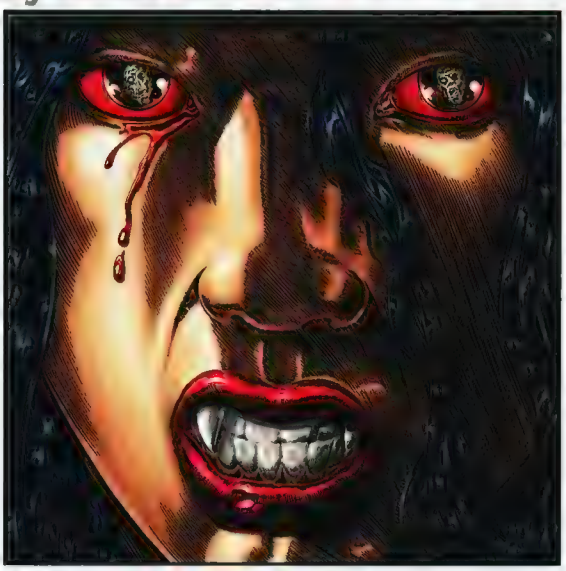


Everyone is afraid of something. Whether it is the IRS, clowns, zombies, or IRS clown zombies, there is something picked up from life [usually childhood] that sticks with you in the dark recesses of your mind. Some fans seek out that dark place and indulge in actively taunting it with horror novels, comics, or movies which illicit those uneasy feelings. Others try to hold the darkness at bay by avoiding anything that could bring those frightening memories to the surface. But very few have taken that fear and found a way to actively combat it, while giving millions of others a weapon to keep the fears in check. Max Brooks has done just that. His novels, the *Zombie Survival Guide* and *World War Z* have entertained and equipped zombie fans and survivalists with the tools needed to battle the undead in any emergency. And many consider his zombie fighting guidelines to be essential preparation for the eventual rise of the undead. *Bleeding Cool Magazine* had an opportunity to talk with Max and obtain the secrets behind his fascination with the shambling dead and uncover the surprises behind his new zombies vs. vampires comic series, *Extinction Parade.*

Many believe *The Zombie Survival Guide* is responsible for the resurgence in popularity of zombies in popular culture. The 2003 manuscript was a New York Times Best Seller and is still a hot commodity in book stores. What is it about zombies that started your fascination with the undead?

I wouldn't so much call it a fascination as a fear. When I was a kid, I accidentally stumbled across an Italian zombie movie on cable. It left what you might call an 'impression' on me. The idea of a mindless, relentless, endlessly multiplying threat was unlike anything I'd ever seen. All previous monster movies, were, at least to me, punishment movies. All their victims had made bad decisions; they had gone swimming after dark, they'd moved into a haunted house, they'd answered a signal from an alien planet. They had been consciously or unconsciously looking for trouble. They found it. Not so with zombies. They came for people who were just minding their own business. They came for everyone. They weren't predators, they were a plague!

Readers may also know you from *The Zombie Survival Guide: Recorded Attacks* and *G.I. Joe: Hearts & Minds* Graphic Novels. What is it about the comic book and graphic novel medium that interests you in creating new projects in the comic market?

Some stories are meant to be visual and comics are the purest visual medium. Unlike movies, you don't have to worry about budgetary constraints. You can see anything, do anything, tell any story you want. My wife likes to remind me of how giddy I was when I got the first pages for *Recorded Attacks* from the artist, Ibraim Roberson. Ever since I'd written those original stories years ago, I'd dreamed of actually seeing them, and now there they were, right in front of me. It felt like a kid under

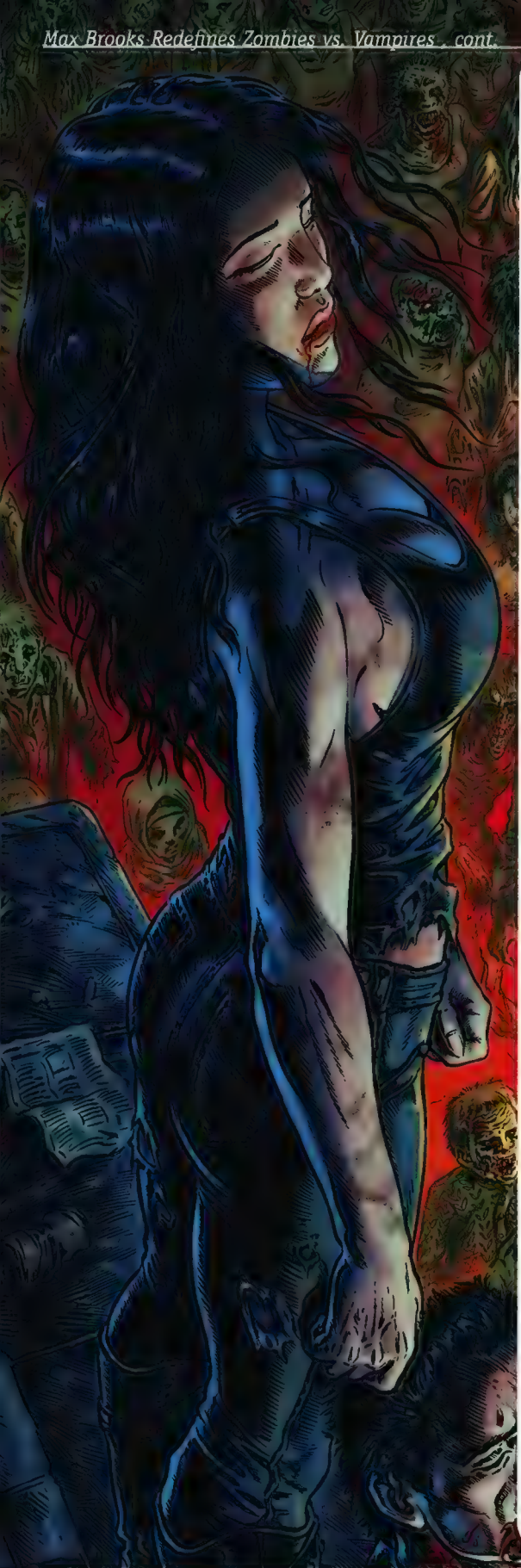
the Christmas tree. Likewise with *GI Joe,* I learned how exciting it was to be surprised by an artist's vision. The first time I saw Howard Chaykin's Major Bludd, it blew me away. It was better than anything I could have imagined.

You won an Emmy Award for your work writing material for *Saturday Night Live*. It is so unusual to find a creative talent that can span multiple genres like you with work in humor, drama, action, and horror. Is there a genre you enjoy writing more than any other?

I definitely would not classify myself as a comedy writer. I can be funny in a social setting, but that's an adapted survival mechanism. Both my parents were famous, and they both had big personalities. I was thrust into a lot of social situations that forced me to use humor to get by. It's served me well but it's not where I live. At my core, I'm an introverted sci-fi nerd. When I sit down to write, I almost never think "what'll make 'em laugh." When I sit down to write, it's about subjects I can't stop thinking about; what are the most efficient solar panels, what's the best way to purify water, what would I most want with me if I ran into a Hobgoblin in the parking lot at Whole Foods.

Avatar Press is launching *Extinction Parade #1*. The new horror series is described as "vampires descending into an all-out war with zombie hordes." It seems like such a natural evolution of classic monster icons. What was your inspiration for this new chapter in the zombie histories you chronicle?

I came up with the idea for a short story a few years ago, right before I was asked, ironically, to be on an episode of *Deadliest Warrior* that pitted zombies against vampires. Even though I'd finished the story before we started taping the show, that experience made me realize how much more I wanted to say on the subject. I was working with three of the smartest horror/sci-fi minds I'd ever met; Matt Mogk, the founder of the Zombie Research Society was with me on Team Zombie while Steve Niles and Scott Bowen were on Team Vampire. Steve and Scott are both formidable scholars who forced me to up my game. They made me examine every link in my logic chain. They made me think longer and harder about arguments that I had simply taken for granted. Likewise, Matt Mogk has a sharp mind that always goes for substance over style. I came out of that show wanting to say so much more about a zombie/vampire conflict and Matt encouraged me to adapt my short story into a comic book series.



WE'RE SEEING THE INTERESTING TAG LINE FOR *EXTINCTION PARADE* – "THIS IS HOW A SPECIES DIES" – EVERYWHERE. THE FASCINATING PART ABOUT IT IS THAT IT DOESN'T SPECIFY WHICH OF THE THREE SPECIES, HUMAN, VAMPIRE, OR ZOMBIE; IT IS THAT IS FACING EXTINCTION. HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE SLOGAN AND CAN YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT WHO IS ON THE ENDANGERED SPECIES LIST?

I was really proud of myself for coming up with that slogan, until I realized I hadn't come up with it! I'm lucky enough to be friends with James Felix McKenney, the indie writer-director who made movies like *Satan Hates You, Cannibalistic* and *The Off Season*. My favorite movie of his is *Automatons* and that movie's slogan is "This is how humanity dies." When I saw the movie I must have subconsciously filed that slogan away, and, thank God, I realized it before it was too late. Jim was cool enough to let me bastardize his tag line.

YOU ARE WELL KNOWN FOR PUTTING AN EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT OF TIME INTO RESEARCHING ZOMBIES AND THE DEFENSE TECHNIQUES FOR FIGHTING THE MENACE. FOR *EXTINCTION PARADE* DID YOU DO THE SAME METICULOUS IMMERSION INTO VAMPIRE CULTURE AND ELIMINATION TECHNIQUES?

I get pretty obsessive about researching a project, but it almost always tends to be outside of the subject I'm writing about. My inspiration for *The Zombie Survival Guide* was real disaster preparation. My inspiration for *World War Z* was Stud's Terkel's *The Good War.* My inspiration for *EP* was a book called *Collapse* by Jarred Diamond. It's an amazing study of how past civilizations have dealt with existential threats. Of all the cases he sighted, the one that stayed with me were the Greenland Norse. These Vikings were some of the fiercest warriors in human history, but were ultimately destroyed by climate change. Here was a new war that required an entirely new skillset (and

mindset) and these supposedly invincible fighters just didn't have it in them. They simply could not make the necessary emotional, psychological, and cultural adaptations to survive. That story got me thinking about how another species, other than humans, would deal with a zombie outbreak. Like the Greenland Norse, I wanted that species to appear superficially strong, and supremely confident, but also like those long dead Vikings, be forced to confront the Darwinian challenge to adapt or die. Vampires were the logical choice. I'd always seen them portrayed as superheroes, as demigods living above (and off) our mundane human world. But what if that world suddenly collapsed underneath them? What would they do? How would they survive?

What did you take away from your research on vampires? Was it a healthy respect for another class of the damned or did you find yourself comparing their strengths and weaknesses to those you've outlined so successfully in your novels?

Once I decided to do this project, I purposefully avoided new vampire fiction and films. I didn't want to be influenced by anyone else's ideas. Unlike zombie fiction (which was pretty slim when I started writing), vampires are probably the most saturated monster stories in the world. Not only did I not want to be derailed by knowing that there might be something similar out there, I also felt I knew enough about vampires to know that I didn't like them. To me, they've always seemed like parasitic, bloodsucking aristocrats. I never admired them. I never wanted to be them. To me they were the perfect metaphor for a lot of the spoiled, arrogant, utterly helpless rich kids I grew up with. Maybe that's why my hatred of vampires feels so personal. Maybe that's why every time I see them portrayed in fiction, all I want to say to them is "Get a job!"

Did you base any of your zombie or vampire lore on the creatures in popular culture from movies? Some movies seem to adhere to the classic trappings and weaknesses while others invent new iterations to modernize the tales. Where do the *Extinction Parade* creatures draw their influence most from – classic fiction or modernized pop culture references?

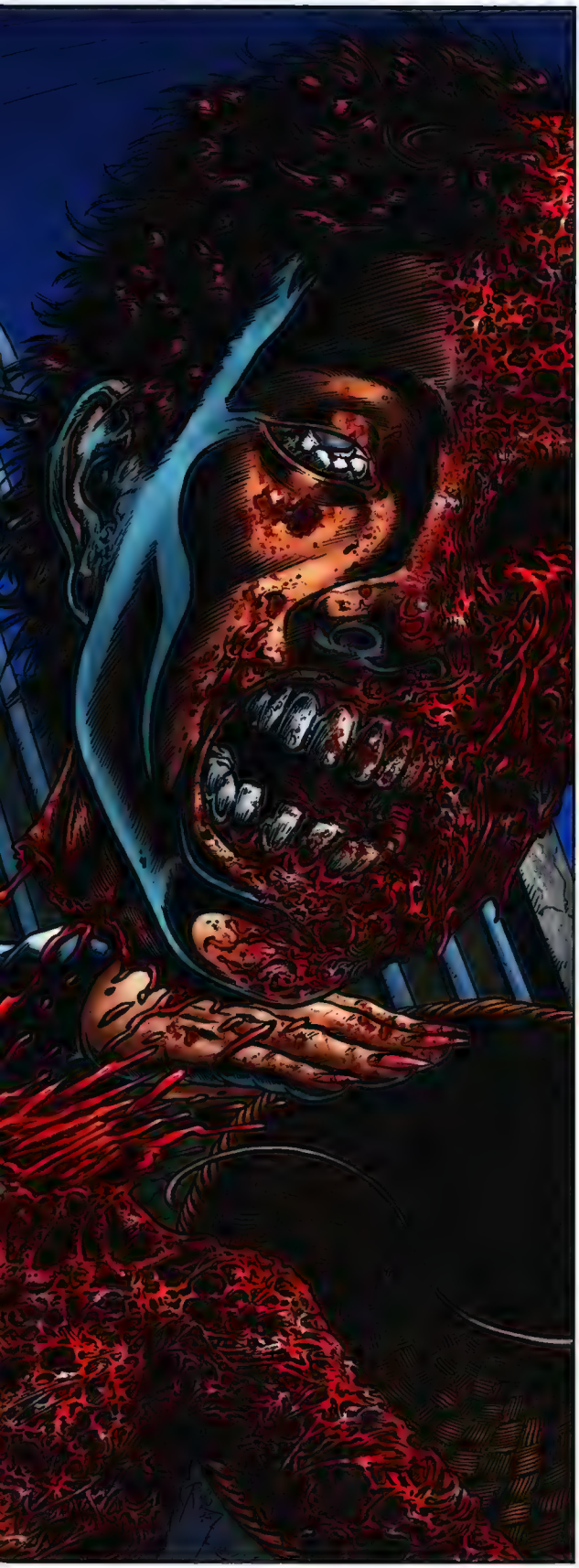
Because the genre is so well trodden, there are, literally infinite pre-existing vampire traits out there. I let the needs of the story dictate which kind of vampires I used. I needed them to only drink human blood. I needed them to be killed by sunlight. I needed them to be immortal. I needed them to have physical assets (strength, speed, agility) that were far beyond any human. Also, I needed them to be successful at anonymity, because that, along with all their other supposed gifts, will come back to haunt them.

Oh yeah, and they also don't sparkle.

Several authors have defined the vampire genre over the years. From Bram Stoker, to Richard Matheson, to Anne Rice, to Guillermo Del Toro – everyone has a slightly different approach to the mythos. As we add the name Max Brooks to the most influential vampire scribes, what can you tell us about your exposure and interest in the literary works of these authors?

Don't forget my buddy Steve Niles. Way before I met him, I read *30 Days of Night* and was totally blown away by his simple, perfect, head-smacking "dammit, why didn't I think of that!?" idea. He took something as basic as geography and turned it into a magnificent story.

Going back into my childhood, I'd have to say that my earliest, deepest influence came from the 1979 *Dracula*.



That was my first exposure to vampires and it scared me half to death (I can still remember that scene in the mine shaft with Mina's glowing red eyes). It also appealed to my budding neurotic need to make sense of everything. Even now, I think the character of Renfield is a stroke of genius. How else could vampires survive in a world of humans? They'd need some clock punching schlubs to do all their grunt work for them. Like human aristocracy, they couldn't exist, at least in my mind, without a dedicated servant class.

Why Malaysia? What was it about this country that drew you to make it the focal point of your story?

I wanted a country that was geographically defensible, so as to highlight any potential human (or vampire) mistakes. The Malay Peninsula works perfectly. The north's narrow choke point makes it relatively easy to protect and even though the zombies in my story can walk underwater, the peninsula's coastline is preferable to a land border. With a few wise choices and a little luck, Malaya could become a fortress. I also wanted a country that has gone through rapid modernization in order to highlight the static nature of vampires. In my mind that species would already have a difficult time adapting to change and that difficulty would be even more acute in a country with light-speed progress like Malaysia. Also, as a big history nerd, I've always been fascinated by the fall of Singapore in World War II. Here was the cornerstone of British Imperial might in Southeast Asia, the "Gibraltar of the East." The odds were totally in Britain's favor, and yet, because of a string of stunning blunders, they suffered an utter disaster at the hands of the Japanese. I thought it might be historically poetic to set my disaster on the scene of a past one.

EXTINCTION PARADE IS ILLUSTRATED BY ARTIST RAULO CACEREES OF *CROSSED* AND *CAPTAIN SWING* FAME. HIS LINE WORK IS INCREDIBLE AND HE HAS THE CREATIVE REACH TO TURN IN AN INCREDIBLE EPIC ON YOUR NEW PROJECT. DID YOU HAND PICK CACERES FOR THE ART CHORES AND WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF HIS WORK ON *EP*?

Raulo was recommended to me by William Christensen at Avatar. I was already a fan of his work on *Crécy*. He has an amazing ability to capture reality with photographic detail. His attention to every individual line is exactly what I wanted in *EP*. In *Crécy*, you really felt like you were there and I think that's very important for a place and time that was relatively unknown. I'm not saying it's wrong to have stylized art. I think what Ben Templesmith did on *30 Days of Night* was brilliant. In certain situations however, when the setting might be foreign to the reader, such as Malaysia in *EP*, I wanted to make sure we captured the most minute detail to really create a sense of being there. Raulo's a master at that kind of artwork. I feel very lucky to be working with him.

ON JUNE 20TH, THE THEATRICAL DEBUT OF THE *WORLD WAR Z* MOVIE WILL COMMENCE AND EVEN MORE PEOPLE WILL GET THEIR FIRST SAMPLE OF THE ZOMBIE EPIC YOU CREATED. WITH BRAD PITT SET IN THE LEAD AND SPECIAL EFFECTS THAT ARE OFF THE CHARTS, IT'S A SAFE BET THAT NEW FANS WILL BE CLAMORING TO PICK UP A COPY OF THE NOVEL IT IS BASED ON AND *EXTINCTION PARADE*. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT HAVING YOUR NEW PROJECT IN STORES THE WEEK OF THE MOVIE DEBUT SO FANS CAN EXPERIENCE YOUR NEW VISION OF HORROR?

Right now it's hard to feel anything for the movie version of *WWZ* until I actually see it. I had nothing to do with the making of the film and I'm not sure

if the film has anything to do with my book. As far as my 'vision of horror', the only thing that horrifies me is not doing a thorough enough job on *Extinction Parade*.

Fans really enjoy the lectures you give on zombie survival across the comic book convention circuit. Your charisma on stage is incredible and the audience seems to hang on every word. Following each appearance there are more fans that want to meet you and get their books signed. Are you enjoying giving the lectures as much as the people who are listening to them?

I enjoy the Q & A part of my lectures much more than the actual lecturing part. I know what I'm going to say, but I never know what I'm going to be asked. Many people want to know who I'd want in my anti-zombie group, what kind of survival skills I'm looking for, where I'd flee to, and what my favorite weapon is. I've also been asked some eye-poppers like "What if I tried to eat them first?" and "When is it okay to leave old people as bait?" One time I got asked about Nazi zombies to which I answered "You're asking the wrong Brooks."

You have done voice over work on some significant cartoon series – *Justice League*, *Buzz Lightyear of Star Command*, *Batman Beyond*, *The Wild Thornberry's*, and *Roughnecks: The Starship Troopers Chronicles*. Do you have any plans to do a recorded version of *Extinction Parade* when the trade collection is published?

I honestly have never thought about it until now. I'm too deep into recording the unabridged audiobook of *WWZ* to think of anything beyond that. Maybe when it's done, and when the comic series winds down, I can think about possibly adapting it into an audiobook.

Last year you were on a panel with the father of the zombie phenomena, George A. Romero. *Night of the Living Dead* and its sequels have had a lasting effect on six generations of movie goers. How did the *Night* films influence you and what is your favorite part of meeting the man behind them?

All praise to the honorable George A. Romero! I've always said it's his world and we're just living in it. George completely reinvented a genre, the way George Lucas did with outer space. George Romero gave us a level of depth and intelligence and social commentary we still don't see in most zombie stories. He also gave us hope! His movies show that zombies are easily defeated if we just make the right choices. That single principle, that our fate is in our own hands, has been the guiding light for all my zombie stories, including *EP*.

Zombies have been in the news recently with members of Canadian Parliament and the Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister declaring that "Canada will never become a safe haven for zombies, ever." Popular zombie culture has been popping up everywhere with zombie runs, organized undead parades, and television programs dedicated to the subdead menace. Most of these people look to you as the expert in defense against the growing walker threat. What advice do you have for fans who want to make sure they are safe from the zombie apocalypse?

I've always said, first and foremost, stay calm. Surviving a zombie plague, like surviving any disaster, is a hell of a lot harder without a cool head. In any situation, I'd say take a deep breath, think about the situation, then rationally, intelligently, formulate a solution. I think if there really were a zombie plague, a hell of a lot more people would die in the ensuing panic then by actual undead teeth.

Are there any plans for a follow up to Extinction Parade that might bring even more of the subdead to the forefront of pop culture? Or are werewolves, mummies, creatures from the deep, and Chupacabras not currently on your radar?

Maybe, someday. Right now I just have to keep my eyes firmly on the project in front of me. I have to focus on each script as well as the overall story arc. I have to be on the lookout for logic flaws, information gaps, and generally all potential mistakes. This has been quite an undertaking for me and, at the time of this writing, it's far from over.

http://bcool.bz/bcm4-wolv

THE WOLVERINE - HALF A WORLD AWAY

by Brendon Connelly

Last autumn, I flew half way around the globe to visit the set of *The Wolverine*. And while I was definitely the most excited by the Koalas and the most jet-lagged, I wasn't the only one a long way from home.

While much of the film was shot at Fox's Sydney sound stages and on location around the city, this new movie takes place almost entirely in Japan. And those rain-slicked, neon streets are not the natural habitat for Logan. He doesn't exactly blend in at the ancient temples.

There is something about the samurai code that suits him though, and as the film goes on, we'll see just how the Wolverine is a Ronin, a masterless samurai.

Here's an exclusive image from the film. You're probably slightly more likely to win a stare-down with this photograph than you would be with the real thing.

In the next issue you'll be able to read a full-on report from the set, featuring contributions from Hugh Jackman, director James Mangold and more of the cast and crew. You'll also be able to find a lot more at Bleeding Cool Online as we get closer to the film's release.

In the meantime, though, here are a few teasers:

The now infamous bone claws image is below. That should give a clue to where in the story this takes place. Remember those set pictures of a POW camp?

The trousers below match those above, so you can slot this scene into the same sequence too, I'm sure.

There was some online gossip about Jackman's physique being photoshopped for movie stills, but let me tell you, No It Was Not. He's whatever it is two notches past buff.

He will put a top on to go out in the snow, though.

And dare I suggest this next picture shows that he's staying in to avoid the rain?

Finally, a sunny day. I spent a whole day on this location, and in the next report, I'll be able to tell you exactly what was going on, whose blood that it is and why Logan is dressed this way.

MUCH ADO ABOUT *MUCH ADO*, JUST A LITTLE ADO ABOUT *SHIELD*

by Brendon Connelly

Somehow, Joss Whedon managed to plan, adapt, rehearse, shoot and edit an entire second film while he was working on *The Avengers*. Some of that was keeping the project smaller, some of it was keeping it in the family, and some of it was in taking on a project that was already in fit shape - and you don't get much fitter than a screenplay by Shakespeare.

The result is *Much Ado About Nothing*, Whedon style, Shakespeare staged as one long, drunken party scene. Filmed in Whedon's own house with many regular members of his recurring troupe, the only thing to give away that this isn't a Joss original is the rather florid, rhythmic patter - and even then, only just.

I sat down with Whedon to talk about this new film, his work on the upcoming *SHIELD* show, and what's next for his home-made movie studio-ette, Bellweather Pictures. Here's what he had to tell me.

BRIDGE VS. POKER

It's really fun to take something that is already built and say "Where do I fit in? Who am I in this? How does this work for me? How do I get from A to B?"

I love writing but when you're desperately trying to put together a giant ensemble, which both of the last things I've done were, there's a ton of heavy lifting. With *Much Ado About Nothing*, though, not only has all of that heavy lifting been done, it's been done by William Shakespeare. I just had to figure out what I think it means and how I can convey that visually, what I can add without trying to change or outsmart the Bard - as too many adaptations have tried.

I love editing slightly more than I love directing, but not as much as I love writing. I love editing because it's all there and now, what do you do with it? As a child I did not

play Poker, I played Bridge, and Bridge is about "What have I got?" It's about "This should go here, this should come after." It might as well be the notecards you have when you're editing a movie.

With shooting, it's like poker. "I've got to bluff my way through this. I've got to make them think I'm holding something." I like shooting more than I did because I now feel like I don't have to bluff as much.

In a way, adapting a script is like editing because there it is, and I can just maybe jigger this bit slightly, I can maybe combine these characters. But I decided I wasn't going to touch the text with *Much Ado*. I wasn't going to try and force it to fit something I think I need, or I think the audience or the studio needs, I'm going to trust that the reason I love this play, the reason it's been put on for four hundred years, is going to come through.

ADDING TO SHAKESPEARE

I would put actions that I'd invented in the script or feed them to the cast on the day. Giant ensembles are tricky, creating certain problems where characters don't seem to have enough to do. For example, Benedick never opens his mouth during the shaming of Hero and so I literally had him go off and get a little drink and then when he comes back, he's in the middle of it, he's catching up and the first time we cut to him is when Don John is talking and we see him thinking "Hang on a second."

Those things, and obviously like having Hero watch the funeral procession, are what I needed to do to make the arcs of the characters cohere, just from moment to moment as well as over long stretches of scenes. Watching Hero see that Claudio is remorseful and then watching her forgive him, particularly as she's with Beatrice who is clearly not forgiving him, buys us the last scene, in a way.

THE PRACTICAL AND THE ARTISTIC

Everything was practical and artistic, the two became indistinguishable and that is how it should be. The play takes place in one house, we had one house, and one we felt was perfect for the play to be filmed in. But it's also perfect because we wanted this to be something that had this momentum. It's the party that goes on too long. It has this intimacy and compact identity.

I prepped the film in a month and shot it in twelve days. Because of it being one

location, that location was another master that I was serving, call it a character. Now you have an aesthetic that's been taken care of, and you just have to figure out where to put everything.

Black and white is very practical when the sun is setting and you have to pretend that it's not. It's very practical when you can't control things that might be far away in frame, something that might be bright orange. And also, this is meant to be a noir comedy and this movie is meant to have an old world elegance. Black and white was an aesthetic decision that I soon realized was going to save me a lot of time.

THE ENERGY OF LIVE PERFORMANCE

I have my troupe and we'd been doing Shakespeare readings. The first reason I wanted to make this was to capture Amy and Alexis' performances from those sessions. It took me a long time to figure out "Oh, I have something to say, so I should actually make this as a film." For a long time I just wanted to film them doing the reading.

But we very much didn't want to "present a play," we wanted to make a film that had some of the energy of live performance.

I went to the people that I love and trust. I needed people who could carry the load because we weren't going to have much time. We certainly weren't going to have time for anybody to not know their words.

PARTY ALL NIGHT

This whole movie is about duplicity, misjudgment, these outbursts of passion. These people are constantly playing games and scheming, either for good or bad purposes but never with anything other than a game in mind. It felt to us like the sixties, and they're the elite, they're all very rich and privileged, he's a politician and he's a prince, and they can get away with anything so they're all just as drunk as mice. There were some moments where I thought "We can't even justify this plot device unless he's drunk." Staging "the party that never stops" felt like the right way to present these events. We decided to have the party go all night and make it a huge long party scene.

There was never that much light in the house so we could never fake day for night. We wanted to do the pool scene and we knew we couldn't light the mountains so we did it at dusk for daybreak, just as the sun was about to set we pretended it was just coming up. So we shot the stuff that comes right after that actually right before it, so that the sun was just slightly higher. And when he goes into the kitchen, we bought actual lights and blasted them into the window for that directional morning light. That's a scene that took all day to shoot and the sun began to go away, so we had to start closing doors in the background so nobody would see. But this got us the feel we wanted of one of those parties, intimate but also unseemly.

KEEPING BUSY

Our next movie, *In Your Eyes* is being cut, it's in post now, close to being finished. We're taking our time. That's part of the Bellweather ethos. We're not beholden to somebody's festival schedule. We've decided that we'll get the film together, find out what we think about it, where it belongs, and then decide our strategy.

Doctor Horrible 2 and *Wastelanders* both got kind of beaten back by the *SHIELD* show, so we're not positive what's going to be next. If we had scripts for *Wastelanders* I would probably have tried to fit it in already, somehow. Warren Ellis and I have broken the story for that and we're just starting to give each other pages right now. This project has caved in on Warren before now, but he's very patient.

As with all of my shows, I want every episode of *SHIELD* to be self-contained yet have an overarching place where we're heading. Every episode feeds that desire to learn more and see the characters evolve but it doesn't just feel like a series of plot twists. I want to come away from every episode saying "Well, I resolved that, but how about this?" We have a lot of things still to work out but we do know exactly how we'd end the first season... we just have to get one.

●●●

Thanks again to Joss for taking the time to talk to me. *Much Ado About Nothing* will be in UK cinemas on June 14th, and in the US a week earlier, on June 7th. *In Your Eyes* was written by Whedon, directed by Brin Hill and should start to play festivals later this year. *SHIELD* is expected to start screening on ABC this Autumn. Just like you, I wish I could watch them all now. But we can't.

TAKING THE SUPER OUT OF THE HEROES:

Dark Horse Unmasks *X*, *Victories* and *Dream Thief*

By *Rich Handley*

TAKING THE SUPER OUT OF THE HEROES

by Rich Handley

Dark Horse Comics has emerged as the largest independent American comic book and manga publisher. Since 1986, the company has produced a wide range of ongoing and limited series, both original and franchise-based, including horror, comedy, science fiction and other genres. This May, Dark Horse will unveil three new offerings—one a returning favorite, as well as two original titles—each deconstructing the superhero motif.

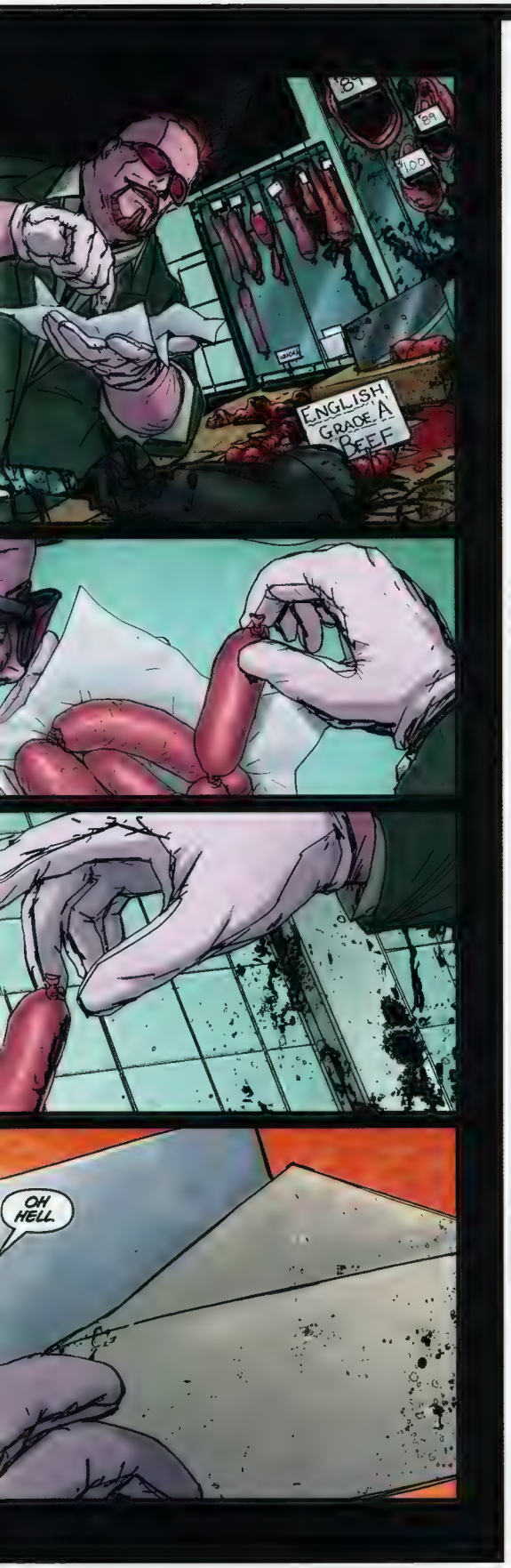
X Marks the Spot

Returning to shelves is the popular series *X*. Published under the company's Comics' Greatest World imprint, the original *X* showcased an unhinged, burn-scarred vigilante who clashed with law enforcement and the criminal world in the fictional, politically corrupt city of Arcadia. The title character debuted in 1993, in *Dark Horse Comics #8-10*, written by Jeremy Prosser and illustrated by N. Steven Harris, and then starred in an ongoing series from writer Steven Grant and several artists, including P. Craig Russell, Ron Wagner, Doug Mahnke and Tim Bradstreet.

During the course of 25 issues, as well as appearances in *Will to Power, Dark Horse Comics, Hero Illustrated Specials, Ghost* and other titles, X faced a slew of mobsters, businessmen, assassins and politicians, leaving only a single mark as a warning to transgressors (the second strike meant death), and nearly always succeeding in killing those within his sights.

In December 2012, crime novelist Duane Swierczynski and artist Eric Nguyen brought X back in a three-part *Dark Horse Presents* serial. Now, the team will pick up where they left off, with a monthly series featuring covers by Dave Wilkins. Swierczynski's new *X* series will offer an updated take on the character, focused not on X's heroism, but rather on how a mentally unstable person without superpowers might

MEATPACKING DISTRICT. ARCADIA.
WHAT'S THAT, TOMIO?
YOU WANT ANOTHER CHANCE TO PROVE YOUR VALUE TO THIS ORGANIZATION?
WELL, THIS IS YOUR CHANCE, BUDDY.
YOU'RE WORTH MORE AS MEAT THAN YOU EVER WERE AS A COLLECTOR.
MR. DUROC...THIS JUST CAME FOR YOU.



fare as a vigilante.

"I don't exactly believe in the whole hero/villain thing," Swierczynski admits. "If they're done right, and have believable motivation, characters are always the heroes of their own stories. X is in a desperate struggle to save his city, and couldn't care less if you called him a 'superhero' or a 'vigilante' or a 'psycho.' He knows what it'll take to save Arcadia, and he's not going to stop until he's brought his town back from the brink—or until he's pushing up daisies (with little X-patterns in the buds, of course)."

New cast members will include Leigh Ferguson, who worked as a journalist until her newspaper folded, leaving Arcadia without a fourth estate. "So she turns to investigative reporting online," Swierczynski explains, "hiding behind a pseudonym... and sooner than later, she crosses paths with X." The writer also plans to explore Arcadia's crime lords, whom he describes as "porcine bosses who have been feasting on Arcadia for years now." One of them, he hints, "may be the most morally bankrupt character I've ever had the pleasure to write."

The novelist did not read many comics in the early 1990s while attending college, but has since read omnibus collections of the older X tales. "The appeal is obvious," he states. "To me, anyway. Who wouldn't want to root for a guy who wants to cut through all of that law-and-order nonsense and punish those responsible for the worst crimes imaginable? Plus, X has no obvious superpowers. And he only has one eye! I mean, seriously. One good punch and that baby swells shut and he's done for. I like a protagonist who is one punch away from the morgue."

Readers unfamiliar with the previous series should have no problem enjoying the re-launch, Swierczynski assures. "Part of the fun of this new series is that you really don't know X's backstory at all. I'm planning on teasing it out for as long as possible—at least, until X fans team up and catch me, and burn me at the stake."

Victory Is Theirs

Vigilantism will also feature in Dark Horse's new five-issue superhero mini-series *Victories*, written and illustrated by 2011 Eisner Award winner, Michael Avon Oeming, who will also provide covers. The series will unveil a new Batman-like hero called Faustus, part of a superhero team known as the Victories.

The group's nemesis, an arrogant vigilante known as the Jackal, fancies himself a hero but tortures and murders criminals. Although the Jackal admires the Victories, he considers them hypocritical and vows to convert Faustus to his own philosophies. The animistic Jackal has skewed values compelling him to push others to do as he does; Faustus, he believes, can make a difference in the corrupt and morally bankrupt city—but only if he's willing to kill in the name of justice. The series is set to explore the dynamic between heroes, antiheroes and villains.

During an April 2012 interview with Comic Book Resources, Oeming described his series as "a pretty personal story," as he was receiving therapy for depression and anxiety when he began writing *Victories*, and viewed the series as part of his treatment. Faustus, he explained, suffers from alcoholism and anxiety, which the crime-fighter hides from his team-mates and the public by maintaining the façade of a wisecracker—a dilemma with which Oeming is familiar.

"Sometimes, I would have to find an excuse to get out of a situation by faking a phone call or excusing myself to a restroom," Oeming told CBR. "For me, anxiety never happened in high-stress situations like being on stage or doing a TV interview; it could happen at a dinner with friends or having a normal conversation."

Victories will tell a very different type of superhero epic, according to Dark Horse. "I think heroes are way under-used in the

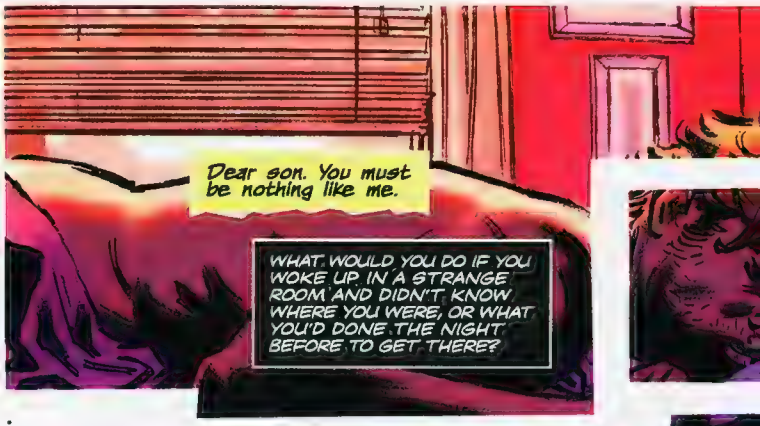
ELECTRICAL AND POWER SUPPLIES HAVE FALTERED AND WE CAN'T GET OUR FOOTING BACK.
MANY GO WITHOUT.
AT FIRST I THOUGHT THIS WAS A BAD THING.
I THOUGHT IT WAS DANGEROUS.
I WAS SCARED.
ONCE I WAS A HERO CALLED THE STRIKE.
ONCE THERE WAS POWER AND LIGHT, THE INTERNET AND COMMUNICATIONS AT OUR FINGERTIPS.
NOW I AM A MONSTER, AND I HAVE TO REDEFINE MYSELF.
NOW WE ARE ON OUR OWN, AND WE HAVE TO REBUILD.

vast possibility of stories that can be told with them," Oeming said during his CBR discussion. "I was looking to do something that bridges a gap between books like David B.'s *Epileptic* and mainstream heroes."

Although Faustus is part of a superhero team, the initial miniseries will focus primarily on the character's relationship with the Jackal. Additional miniseries may be in the works, however, and Oeming has sprinkled tidbits about the rest of the team in his initial story arc, to set the stage for those potential stories. "I think this arc will be the darkest," he told CBR. "It's a tone that I go to, but don't want to live in!"

To Dream, Perchance to Thieve

The nature of heroes and villains will also be explored in *Dream Thief*, written by Bram Stoker Award winner Jai Nitz and illustrated by Greg Smallwood, with covers by Alex Ross and Ryan Sook. This time, the vigilante's actions will incorporate a unique twist, in that they are not his own—nor is he someone striving to be heroic.


Dear son. You must be nothing like me.
WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOU WOKE UP IN A STRANGE ROOM AND DIDN'T KNOW WHERE YOU WERE, OR WHAT YOU'D DONE THE NIGHT BEFORE TO GET THERE?

After stealing an Aboriginal mask from a museum, John Lincoln discovers that the vengeful dead are possessing his body and mind while he sleeps. Each morning, he awakens to find himself with bloody hands and a need to dispose of his latest victim. "*Dream Thief* is a crime-horror-noir story with a supernatural bent," Nitz says. "The concept came from, 'What would you do if you woke up next to a dead body?' I played out this scenario many times in my head before I wrote the book, and before the character of John Lincoln ever existed. The crux of the story is that John wakes up next to a dead body because he just killed that person. The bigger question for him is, "Why?"

Unlike X, Faustus and the Jackal, Lincoln is a criminal and a drug user, not a crime-fighter. As a thief, he is inherently selfish and lazy, interested in fast rewards for little effort. "John Lincoln is kind of a jerk," Nitz explains. "He says and does things that will not endear him to the reader." Nitz incorporated aspects of his own personality in creating the character. "John is equal parts me and the opposite of me. There are times, when writing him, where I make him say exactly what I would want to say in the same situation if I had no filter. And other times, he says the exact opposite of what I would say."

NOPE, SHE SAID SHE'D DRIVE YOU HOME. I ASSUMED THAT MEANT YOUR HOME. YOU PASSED OUT AFTER THE THIRD BAR.
WHEN DID WE RUN INTO HER? WAIT, WE WENT TO A THIRD BAR?

Lincoln will undergo a transformation throughout the series, but readers should not expect him to become the next Batman. "John starts the book as very

unlikeable and un-heroic," Nitz says. "His actions can very much be seen as heroic, but that doesn't make him a hero." Although he declines to elaborate about the "dream thief" label, the first issue does offer a strong hint: As Lincoln sleeps, the memories of the dead become his own, allowing him to understand why his victims deserve to die—though he doesn't know whether the mask is causing this to happen. "The mask could be the center of the mysteries of the book, and it might be a piece of junk. But either way, it's like a bad penny; it just keeps showing up in the darndest places."

The series will feature a number of superhero comic conceits, including superpowers, a mask and costume, and a secret identity. But it is, at its core, a crime story. "Dream Thief is a book about Justice (with a capital J)," Nitz states. "I think readers want to see justice done. That's why we've read Superman and Batman comics for seventy-five years: Justice triumphed. As a species, we like it when that happens. I'm trying to take that concept and turn it on its ear. Justice triumphs, but not the way you expect or even like."

BUT IT'S SLOWLY COMING BACK TO ME. I CHEATED ON CLAIRE LAST NIGHT.
REGGIE, HEY, I WOKE UP AT MONICA'S AND I HAVE A SNEAKING SUSPICION YOU HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THIS.

REGGIE HARRISON IS MY BEST FRIEND. WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SINCE SECOND GRADE WHEN I MOVED TO ATLANTA. HE PLAYED WIDE RECEIVER AT U.G.A AND HOLDS THE N.C.A.A. RECORD FOR MOST PUNT-RETURN YARDS IN A GAME (278).
>sigh< WE WENT OUT, GOT DRUNK, CRASHED AT MY PLACE.
BUT I DROVE YOUR CAR HOME, AND FORGOT I HAD YOUR KEYS. I ACCIDENTALLY TOO THEM TO WORK W ME. AND I COULDN GET THEM BACK T YOU UNTIL MY LUNCH BREAK.
AND IF SHE CALLED, MY PHONE WAS DEAD, AND YO DON'T HAVE T RIGHT CHARGE YADA, YADA, YADA.

HOW ARE YOU NOT HUNGOVER?
I HAVE HEMINGWAY'S LIVER. WHAT'S OUR STORY IF CLAIRE ASKS WHY I DIDN'T COME HOME?
SHE'S NOT GONNA ASK.
JUST IN CASE.

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I REALLY GOTTA GET BACK TO WORK

The Return of Quantum and Woody

By *Gavin Lees*

THE RETURN OF QUANTUM AND WOODY

by Gavin Lees

They're baaaack. Polar opposites. Childhood best friends. Symbiotic costumed crime fighters. That's *Quantum and Woody*! Valiant has proven that they can breathe new life into their brand of comics and end up with a project that is more vibrant than ever. They've revived *X-O Manowar*, *Bloodshoot*, *Harbinger*, and *Archer and Armstrong* by bringing innovative creative teams in to reinvent the classic books for today's audiences. This month they gave James Asmus (writer *Thief of Thieves, Gambit*) and Tom Fowler (artist *Venom, Hulk: Season One*) a chance to reinvigorate the original oddballs of comics, Quantum and Woody. And the result is more Valiant magic.

What if Batman and Robin hated each other? What if the villain of a series used his powers to watch *Wheel of Fortune*? And what if there was a goat? That was the premise behind *Quantum and Woody*: one of the defining titles of Acclaim Comics in the 90s.

In 1994, Acclaim wanted to revitalize the line of Valiant properties with something new, in the vein of *Power Man and Iron Fist*. With that in mind, they brought on-board Christopher Priest and Doc Bright — writer and artist of the classic '80s run of that title — to create *Quantum and Woody*, and what they got was something far more unique than they could have hoped for.

Childhood friends Eric Henderson and Woody Van Chelton were inseparable, until Woody moved schools, following his parents' divorce. They grew up into two very different people, with Eric moving into a glowing career in the military, and Woody ending up a failed musician. They are later reunited when their scientist fathers both die in a suspicious helicopter crash and — despite their obvious resentment for each other — they must to get to the root of the accident to clear themselves of suspicion. The investigation leads them to their fathers' lab, where they try on a set of quantum bands, but then find themselves locked in an energy chamber. Of course, like all science accidents in comics, this leads to them gaining incredible powers.

The gimmick, which pinned the whole series together, is that this accident effectively handcuffed the two characters together. Unless they slam their bands

(now fused to their arms) together every 24 hours, they'll permanently dissipate into a state of pure energy. So, now this odd-couple of crime fighting (of course they fight crime now — they survived an origin story, didn't they?) have to keep within half-a-day's travel of one another. Oh, but they're not a couple.

Definitely not a couple.

One of the defining characteristics of Quantum and Woody's relationship was the fact that they actively got on one another's nerves, despite their ongoing attempts to clear 15 years of emotional baggage, and help those in need. One of the biggest fan-favourite moments of the series was when a throwaway gag from issue 3, where the duo hold a goat hostage to interrogate some Buddhist monks, and are later seen with the goat in a cape and goggles as a knowingly ridiculous way to end the story. The goat was never seen, or mentioned again until a flood of fan letters demanded to know where the goat had gone. Priest and Bright were coerced to revisit the issues they were working on and find ways of inserting the goat in the background. Very soon Vincent Van Goat had his own "inaction" figure, and fans were turning up to signings with actual goats in masks and capes. What had begun as an in-joke practically became the defining feature of the series, with the goat even getting his own one-shot issue.

But humour was not the only quirk that made *Quantum and Woody* such a success. The series used some formal narrative tricks to set it apart from the by-the-numbers approach of many others comics at the time. For one, most of the stories were told in a fractured *Pulp Fiction*-style — partly to avoid the languor of setting-up each story, and partly due to Priest's malfunctioning laptop — which gave each issue a certain postmodern cool. In one extreme example, after the book was brought back after 15 months of cancellation, the creators pretended like the comic had never ceased publication and released issue 32 (rather than 18). In this issue, the entire continuity had changed — Woody was a villain, Quantum was fat, and the goat could fly. The next few issues would have explained how things had become so different... had it not been cancelled a second time.

The series ended with issue 21 before readers could find out how the events of issue 32 came to pass and, due to the lead time on the project, it left a further six completed issues of the comic in limbo. Despite several rumours that these would surface digitally at some point, they remain indefinitely in the vault.

Some hope for fans of *Quantum and Woody* arrived when a rejuvenated Valiant Entertainment began to publish new series of these classic characters in 2012. Recently, they announced that *Quantum and Woody* would be next in line for a reinvented series in 2013, tasking James Asmus and artist Tom Fowler as the main creative team.

As for what that meant for the new series, and how it would live up to the original, Asmus is confident that he and Fowler have struck the right balance between originality and faithfulness: "For us, it's been about figuring out the aspects of the original book that were — and still are — exciting and gratifying. That mix of honest, slightly-inappropriate comedy, textured characters, and visceral comic book mayhem was rare and wonderful then — and might be even rarer now. And the fact that the original was such a short run only means that there are a ton more ways we can set these guys loose."

"We've been in touch with Chris and Doc over the years about a number of projects," said associate editor, Jody LeHeup, "but, in the same way that we developed *X-O Manowar*, *Harbinger*, *Bloodshot*, *Archer & Armstrong* and *Shadowman* with new creative teams, we wanted a fresh point of view with *Quantum and Woody* as well." But for all the originality, Asmus will be preserving the non-linear storytelling and title cards as a signature feature of the reboot, "That's one of those touches that helps give *Quantum and Woody* a unique identity. We'll be flashing back to their

childhood together to help readers get to know our guys and their relationship even better. And it's a nice chance for the book to call out directly to you as you read it."

The original *Quantum and Woody* existed in its own corner of the Valiant universe, but with the increasing popularity of crossovers, it seems likely that the characters will inevitably run into other Valiant series. Indeed, this was key in the publisher's decision to create a new series "I think the trick to integrating them is to be very aware of their specific tone and how that can be additive or reductive when combined with the tone of the Valiant Universe," said Valiant's CEO and Chief Creative Officer, Dinesh Shamdasani, "We've already had fans begging us for an *Archer & Armstrong*, and *Quantum and Woody* team up, not to mention the fun we can have when we play them against the more serious characters in the Valiant universe. We wouldn't have considered integrating them, however, if the elements at the very core of *Quantum and Woody*, the traits that if you changed you would start to pick apart at what makes the concept click, didn't work well with the core traits of the Valiant universe."

While the creators and editors are expectedly excited about the relaunch of this series, they are keeping any specifics about its direction firmly under wraps for now. LeHeup would only say that, "Some things are staying the same and some things are going to be different." Even though Priest always shied away from calling the book a comedy, it would seem like that will be one of the aspects that Asmus is looking to foreground this time: "The humor in the original series was so defining for the book. Even though the title steered more and more serious back then, when you talk to fans now, they mostly bring up the comedic scenes. Ours is still going to have silly things like 'plot'

and 'character development' — but one of our top priorities is to tickle your ribs."

Oh, and there will be goats. The first issue will even come with a QR Voice Variant on an upcoming cover by Fowler which, like *X-O Manowar* #1 last year, will make Vincent speak through your smart phone. Well, they did say that this book would call out to you.

COMICS, MUSIC & MAYHEM

An Interview with Say Anything's Max Bemis

By *James Kuhoric*

COMICS, MUSIC & MAYHEM

by James Kuhoric

Music and comics have long been intertwined with artists of both fields being influenced by work crossing over the boundaries of the two mediums. From the early horror works of Alice Cooper and Kiss to current comics by Tom Morello and Gerard Way, the two fields mix like artistic peanut butter and chocolate. And when a creative haven like BOOM! offers one of music's most talented singers and lyricists a chance to delve into comics, you end up with an innovative title that pairs beautiful illustration with a uniquely powerful voice. Say Anything front man, Max Bemis, steps from behind the microphone to the local comic shop with *Polarity*, a manic depressive trip through the mind of a bipolar artist with latent superpowers. And if the draw of Bemis' distinctive lyrics are not enough to lure you to this project, each issue comes with a free download of an original song available only with the comics. This is music to read the comics to in a way we haven't seen before. In a day and age where big publishers charge $3.99 for scant and thin editorial, *Polarity* offers the best of both worlds in one exciting package.

Bleeding Cool Magazine had an opportunity to talk with Max Bemis about comics, music, and the mayhem of a life in the spotlight.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS BEEN A COMIC BOOK FAN? WHAT COMICS ARE YOU READING?

I've been a diehard comic fan since I could read. It's something that over the course of my life has become a kind of a scary obsession. I've got an entire library in my house dedicated to graphic novels. Usually I buy comics digitally and print trade collections. But there are so many great books that I'm reading right now. I'm finishing up the *Sweet Tooth* series; I'm a fan of Jeff Lemire and all of his stuff. Books like *Hellblazer* I've been obsessed with forever and I'm working my way through the entire series again. The recent *Crossed* stuff has been great. And I'm finishing up on all the Marvel books from before the reboot. I'm a big fan of the architects at Marvel and read anything from Bendis and Fraction, [I] just love what those guys are doing.

WERE THERE ANY COMICS THAT INSPIRED YOU OR CONTRIBUTED BITS TO YOUR MUSIC?

Of course, yeah, *The Invisibles* by Grant Morrison was one of the big ones. It took reading it a few times to really click with me the way the comic was intended to click with the reader, but by that time it really changed my entire outlook on life, humanity, and spirituality. I'm a big Grant Morrison fan and a lot of his ideas influenced my music. By the time we did our third record, the past two albums were very inspired by that series and Grant Morrison's ideas.

Is it fair to say *Polarity* is in a sense a companion piece to your first album "... Is a Real Boy"?"

I try not to look at it that way, there have been actors, directors, and musicians that made books that tie into their work outside of comics. But I don't see *Polarity* in that light. I think the story really stands on its own. There are elements of it that are highly autobiographical the same way that my music is, so obviously there is some cross-over. In fact I won't give anything away, but there are some direct references to Say Anything stuff in there that you wouldn't necessarily catch unless you are familiar with the band. I don't see it as a companion piece; I just see it as highly informed by my life, which also influences my music.

Say Anything fans know you from the music and original lyrics behind songs like "Alive with the Glory of Love." Will those fans be able to enjoy this comic on another level from experiencing the songs and themes of your music?

I think people who identify with my voice will really enjoy *Polarity*. That's the one thing I can pretty much guarantee. My lyrics, how I frame the world, and the way I speak - my voice as a musician is very similar to my voice as a [comic] writer. I think they'll take away that the story is like listening to a Say Anything song. It does relate to a certain time in my life that really was encapsulated by our early records. I think they'll be pleased to see how much they have in common in that respect.

Timothy Woods is described as "a bipolar artist stuck in the world of hipsters, meaningless sex, and vain art." Are there any reflections in the character of personal challenges you have faced over the years?

Yeah, I went to a really liberal artsy college in New York, right around the birth of the gentrified hipster. Growing up in LA there was a lot of that, too. People were listening to The Strokes and calling it "indie rock" and moving to Brooklyn. I was nineteen or twenty years old but always felt very alienated by it, sort of the way Tim does in the book. My life has skirted the existence of that world to the point where I can kind of criticize and make fun of it in this book. I was definitely in some of the circumstances that Tim faces in *Polarity* and have a first-hand knowledge of his environment.

The original music component of the comic series is a breath of fresh air and a welcome addition to the field. What made you decide to include the unique downloads with the comic books?

It started out with me on the phone with Ross [Richie] and Matt [Gagnon], just having the first conversation after pitching the book and they were very enthusiastic about it. We were talking about the different places we could take the series in terms of the plot and how we would market it. And one of the things that came up was, if we wanted to invite in fans of my music that are new to comics, including original music might be a good way for them to have something they get. And also from a purely creative level, it's kind of cool to be able to craft a soundtrack myself for something. I've known some comics to have soundtracks and it's very rare for the person creating it to be both the musician and writer of the book. It hasn't really been done too much to the best of my knowledge.

What has it been like working with Boom! artist Jorge Coelho and seeing your creation come to life on the page? Is it similar to completing a music recording or completely different?

He's amazing because he's insanely talented and super sweet. He's the perfect artist for the book in many respects. English is not his first language, but the book is so riveted in conversation and he has nailed the expressions of the characters perfectly. It's really amazing to see how he turns the scripts into these beautiful interpretations of what I envisioned.

The process of making a comic was very different from making music. You can do other things when writing – you can take breaks or stop to watch a half hour of *Buffy*. At a concert you're on the spot and are always on to make sure it's the right energy level. Or if you are recording you can't stop in the middle of it to do something else. It's been a little less taxing [writing] is the thing, equally fun but less taxing. That isn't to say that I don't put in as much effort, I'm highly ambitious

and I want this comic to really do and be something. But at the same time it felt very effortless and fun to create it. This is one of the coolest mediums in the world and it's one of the most wonderful subcultures to be in. Take a guy like Matt Fraction, the dude is a star to me. He's like bigger than Beyoncé to me. And that's one of the things I really enjoy about comics. It has nothing to do with your looks or popularity, and is based on how good you are telling a story. In comics there is an earnestness to the medium and fans of the creators they follow.

FOR COMIC BOOK FANS WHO MAY NOT KNOW YOUR MUSIC, WHAT DO YOU WANT THEM TO KNOW ABOUT *POLARITY* AND DO YOU HAVE PLANS TO CREATE OTHER ORIGINAL COMICS IN THE FUTURE?

Everyone has different tastes and you can't make something that pleases everybody. But I think my tastes as a comic fan are so diverse that it has the potential to speak to a wide range of fans who like different stuff. It's sardonic, it has black humor, but at the same time it's exciting and is an adventure book. It does have something for everyone. It's refreshing in the sense that it's connected to the real world and is "real world funny." The humor in the book is a little more like the humor you'd expect in film in its accessibility. It's a little more universal in its appeal. You don't have to be an old school comic fan to get the comedy in *Polarity*. People who are looking for things that are a little more grounded in reality will enjoy the book.

As for other projects, I do have some stuff in development but I can't really talk about them. I'd like to make a real go of this and to become a regular comic writer. I'd like to do four to seven books a month if it works out. I don't see this as a vanity project or as my foray into comics; I really want to be putting myself out there with the work. I hope fans enjoy the book and will support future projects.

● ● ●

Listening to the creative and colorful lyrics of Say Anything music and talking with Max about his passion for comics made a real impression on me. The album is called "Is a Real Boy" and Max's work on *Polarity* and his upcoming creative projects combining comics and music have answered my questions about his passion and ability as a creator. It's quite clear to me that Max Bemis "Is a Real Comics Writer."

CENSOR AND BE DAMNED

by Rich Johnston

Some people believe that censorship can only come from the government, laws, police and civil servants, oppressing those with a voice who have something to say. And that censorship can never come from the private sector, after all employees are free to leave that employ and practise their freedom of speech elsewhere. It's a popular view, especially in America, but it's wrong.

Technically if nothing else, the dictionary definition makes no special case for censorship being the action of a state. But there's a deeper subtext to this – the belief that censorship is wrong, is against the US Constitutional guarantees of free speech, but as it's commonly practiced by business and the free market, and as they are by definition "good," then whatever they are doing can't be censorship. Because censorship is "bad."

The thing is, censorship isn't by its definition good or bad, and can be practised by anyone. Indeed we do it to ourselves, we self-censor all the time.

But here are some prime examples of censorship in the comics industry. Whether it's good or bad, well, that's totally up to you to decide.

The Code

The Comics Code Authority has often been painted as state censorship of comics, but it was no such thing. It was an industry way to pacify the government, sure, but it wasn't run by them. It was also handy to get rid of any unwelcome competition and work as a public relations department so that parents thought all comics would be fine for little Johnnie to read.

And while it was mocked for such criteria as "in every instance good shall triumph over evil and the criminal [shall be] punished for his misdeeds," it also had the likes of "females shall be drawn realistically without exaggeration of any physical qualities," which these days some people might prefer a little more of.

Over the years it was forced to change, but sometimes it caused some very odd changes, often at the last minute, leaving some comic books having their very hearts ripped out. Compare and contrast this art from a Joe Simon and Jack Kirby romance comic from the fifties that was hideously bowdlerised.

THIS FIFTY BUCKS YOU GOT TONIGHT IS CHICKEN-FEED, JENNIE! YOU'VE GOT TALENT, BEAUTY! COME TO NEW YORK... I'LL STAKE YOU TO A TICKET, AND MAKE YOU A STAR...
PLEASE... MY HAIR... DON'T...
THIS FIFTY BUCKS YOU GOT TONIGHT IS CHICKEN-FEED, JENNIE! YOU'VE GOT TALENT, BEAUTY! COME TO NEW YORK...

Or take these pages from the same comic book published before the Code, and then again afterwards.

But for all its ills, the Comics Code Authority did give publishers and creators a solid idea of what was, and was not acceptable, even if it took a lot of trouble to find out exactly where those lines were. When mainstream comics began being published without the Comics Code, suddenly that line was gone and what was, and was not acceptable, became a matter of debate. And we managed to get some of the more entertaining examples in a similar before and after fashion.

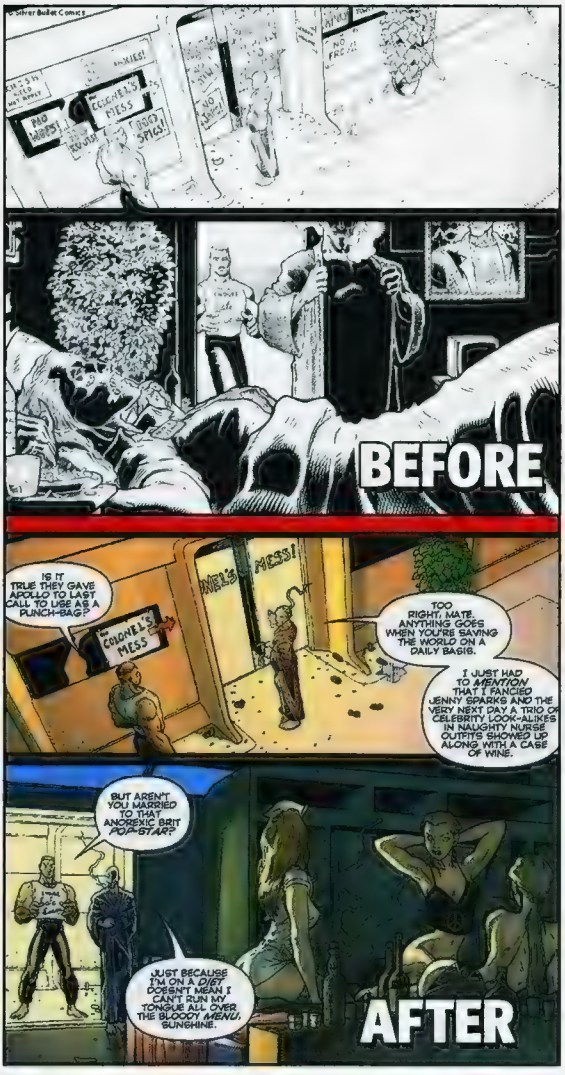
The Authority.

We're going to start with a classic. Warren Ellis and Bryan Hitch rebooted their politically complex conspiracy comic, *Stormwatch*, which was failing in sales, into *The Authority*, which pioneered the concept of "widescreen comics" in the American industry. Packed with lots of "kicks and explodo," it saw superhero types making tough decisions to sacrifice the few for the many, and take down the bad guys with extreme prejudice.

What was not so obvious to many, was that *The Authority* was meant to be the bad guys – and the clue was in the name. This was Judge Dredd as a team of superheroes, assured that they were in the right and taking action. But then many people never twigged that Judge Dredd was also the bad guy. These were fascist superheroes, hidden behind some easy, justifiable targets. But it would be until Mark Millar began writing the book that the more offensive aspects would start to cause problems. Especially for new publisher DC Comics who had bought *The Authority* publisher Wildstorm, which was previously part of Image Comics.

Millar committed the crime of getting publicity for the comic on his own terms rather than those of DC Comics and scored front page splashes on a number of newspapers around the world for talking up the fact that the comic contained two gay superhero members who were a couple. This instantly flagged the attention of publisher Paul Levitz and from that moment on the comic was under a microscope. As a Wildstorm comic, it wasn't covered by the Comics Code, but also it wasn't a mature readers comic. So everything became rather ill-defined. Here are a few changes made to the comic during its subsequent run: recognisable politicians and countries changed, same-sex kisses removed, violence toned way down, especially sexual violence and a lack of people having sex with dead bodies. Many thanks go out

to the original art dealers for making it possible for us to be able to see the differences.


BEFORE
IS IT TRUE THEY GAVE APOLLO TO LAST CALL TO USE AS A PUNCH-BAG?
COLONEL'S MESS
TOO RIGHT, MATE. ANYTHING GOES WHEN YOU'RE SAVING THE WORLD ON A DAILY BASIS.
I JUST HAD TO MENTION THAT I FANCIED JENNY SPARKS AND THE VERY NEXT DAY A TRIO OF CELEBRITY LOOK-ALIKES IN NAUGHTY NURSE OUTFITS SHOWED UP ALONG WITH A CASE OF WINE.
BUT AREN'T YOU MARRIED TO THAT ANOREXIC BRIT POP-STAR?
JUST BECAUSE I'M ON A DIET DOESN'T MEAN I CAN'T RUN MY TONGUE ALL OVER THE BLOODY MENU, SUNSHINE.
AFTER

The Naked She-Devil

Shanna The She Devil was a comic by Frank Cho intended to be published under Marvel's mature readers imprint MAX. That was the deal, and so Frank Cho went to town delivering what is often described as "glamour shots," heavy on exposed breasts and bottoms, in a rather fun pulp jungle romp. At which point he was told that the MAX label was crippling sales on other books and the book would suddenly have to be a little more All Ages. Cho told me at the time "There weren't too many changes that needed to be made. Sure there were few pages that had to be adjusted to fit the rating especially in *'Shanna' #2*, but the overall story wasn't altered. I didn't put any nudity for the sake of putting nudity. If the scene didn't warrant a nude shot, I didn't put it in. So the transition from Rated R to PG13 was relatively smooth. To be honest, it wasn't the nudity that I was afraid of being censored. It was the violence. Much to my relief, Marvel didn't tone down any of the violence. (I guess that says a lot about this country.)"

We can't even show you the completely uncensored images, but here is a comparison shot with a black bar.

Of course that was ten years years ago, have things changed since then? No, the cover to Frank Cho's new *Savage Wolverine* comic, starring Shanna also had to have a little extra foliage added before publication. It's almost like he's doing it on purpose.

Words And Pictures

Nudity has often caused panic and running around at publishers. One issue of Elektra featured the character nude, her "bits hidden by shadows and word balloons," but it was just a bit too much for Marvel and the issue was withdrawn. But rather than pulp all the copies, they sold them to Nick Barrucci of Dynamic Forces who got Greg Horn to sign them and then sold them for a very pretty penny indeed.

Something that didn't suit DC Comics over their "Pottymouth Batman" incident, when Frank Miller and Jim Lee's *All Star Batman And Robin The Boy Wonder* saw the comic printed with swear words blacked out, but not blacked out well enough, leading to all manner of uses of what are colloquially known as the F-word and the C-word. Let's call them "Fudge" and "Count." So we had Batgirl being called a Count by all the bad guys, while she preferred to call herself the Fudging Batgirl. Cue a mass recall, East Coast shops selling copies for a hundred dollars, the situation being mocked on late night talk shows and... editor Bob Schreck getting fired. You see, it's all fun and games until someone gets hurt.

Talking of which, how the original Damian looked when he died in *Batman Inc #8*... the inks compared to the final version. A little less "Robin kebab" there.

Cover Gallery

Of late, DC Comics has had quite a spate of images released as the official covers to a comic, only for people to think better of it in the light of day and requesting a change here or there. Here are some of our favourites... it's mostly down to women's exposed breasts, but we do get one cover where Citizen Steel's covered penis gets a reduction job.

Cheese Eating Surrender Kirby Redrawers

Though, if you think we've got it bad with censorship, pity the French. They saw all sorts of American titles that had already gone through the American Comics Code continued to be dulled down to suit what the French saw as more of an All Ages audience.

Seriously, how would you like to redraw Jack Kirby? If you lived in France, this was your chance.

Real State Censorship

And to pacify those who still state that censorship can only occur from the state, there is one example that stands head and shoulders over all the others.

That of Argentinian comic book writer and publisher, Hector Oesterheld, who wrote very positive biography of Che Guevara, a very unflattering comic about Evita Peron and a comic about a repressive future Argentinian.

After the military coup in the late seventies, Oesterheld and his four children and their families were "disappeared." After a brief sighting in captivity in 1977, he and his family were never seen again. When it comes to censorship, you never get more final than that.

EVIL DEAD REDUX

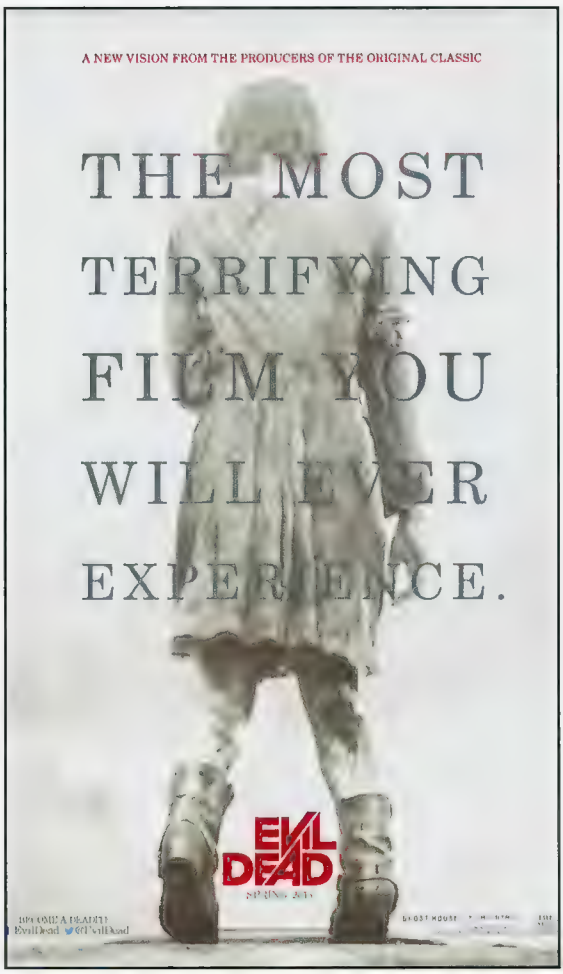
by James Kuhoric

How do you even approach a task like remaking Sam Rami's innovative 1981 horror classic, *The Evil Dead*? There are so many reasons not to do it and no matter how good the movie is, there will be fans that will pan it. From "You can't have *Evil Dead* without Bruce Campbell" to "No remake is better than the original" to a thousand other similar sentiments, you'll hear comments that run the gamut against a remake of classic horror films.

Personally, I have a simple two-part rule on remakes – Bring me something new to the table and keep me entertained. As long as you can do those two things, chances are I'll at least be happy with the money I spent to see it in the theater. So on opening night (it's *Evil Dead* – you have to see it at night), I went to the local theater and plunked down my cash to see the remake. Surrounded by high school students who apparently didn't realize it was a remake and with my traditional giant tub of popcorn and cask of soda, I settled in for what I hoped was an entertaining bit of unsettling horror. As the film began, I remembered the first time I saw *Evil Dead II* as a teen and hoped that just maybe, this movie would live up to the high standards set by past experiences.

What ensued was an up and down ride with some new twists and turns that had me smiling as we left the theater. The new *Evil Dead* did an admirable job of fulfilling my rules for remakes. From the very smart move of not trying to cast a new "Ash" to the emphasis on grueling horror that the original so proudly touted, the film entertained and stood up as something I will add to my movie collection when it is released on Blu Ray. It didn't cover a lot of new ground, but it did have some plot twists that added to what was originally presented. From framing the film with a new opening sequence of what happened at the cabin before to a third act that veered significantly away from the established storyline, the film attempted to be its own creature and not live scene by scene up to the original.

If you missed the film (accidentally or on purpose) we put together this look at some scenes that might sway you one way or the other toward checking it out on DVD later this year.



The complex I saw the film in had a beautiful wall length poster right outside the theater. I took a few minutes to reflect upon it before going in to see the movie. While it isn't as dynamic as the original poster, it does evoke a bit of dread when you take it in. Simplicity works in this case – from the bold claim of it being "the most terrifying film you will ever experience" to the sense of desperation in the girl's state and stance. Good start...

After the new intro, we meet the cast. I have to admit...as we met Mia, David, Eric, Olivia, and Natalie that I was thinking this was way too "pretty" a group for an *Evil Dead* movie.

Eric is sort of an Ash-Scottie mash up character. He gets all the funny lines in the film and actually does a pretty good job getting beat to hell and maintaining an entertaining personality. I was a bit disappointed to see the redesign of the Necronomicon. It felt a bit like "Demon Summoning for Dummies."

This is what I've been waiting for...the possessions begin and the friends are taken one-by-one. Make up and special effects for the Deadite possessions were fantastic. They brought some new images to the look and I really enjoyed it. But, it did make something very clear to me. The original *Evil Dead* worked so well because Sam Rami was able to get three talented actresses to become something horrible. Their acting from the voices to the jerky body motions is what made that first film. Our new cast does an admirable job with the possessions, but go back and watch the original again. It was the women that made the movie stand out.

What's this...an evil hand getting cut off with an electric knife? That's an ode to *Evil Dead II* for sure, but alas, beautiful

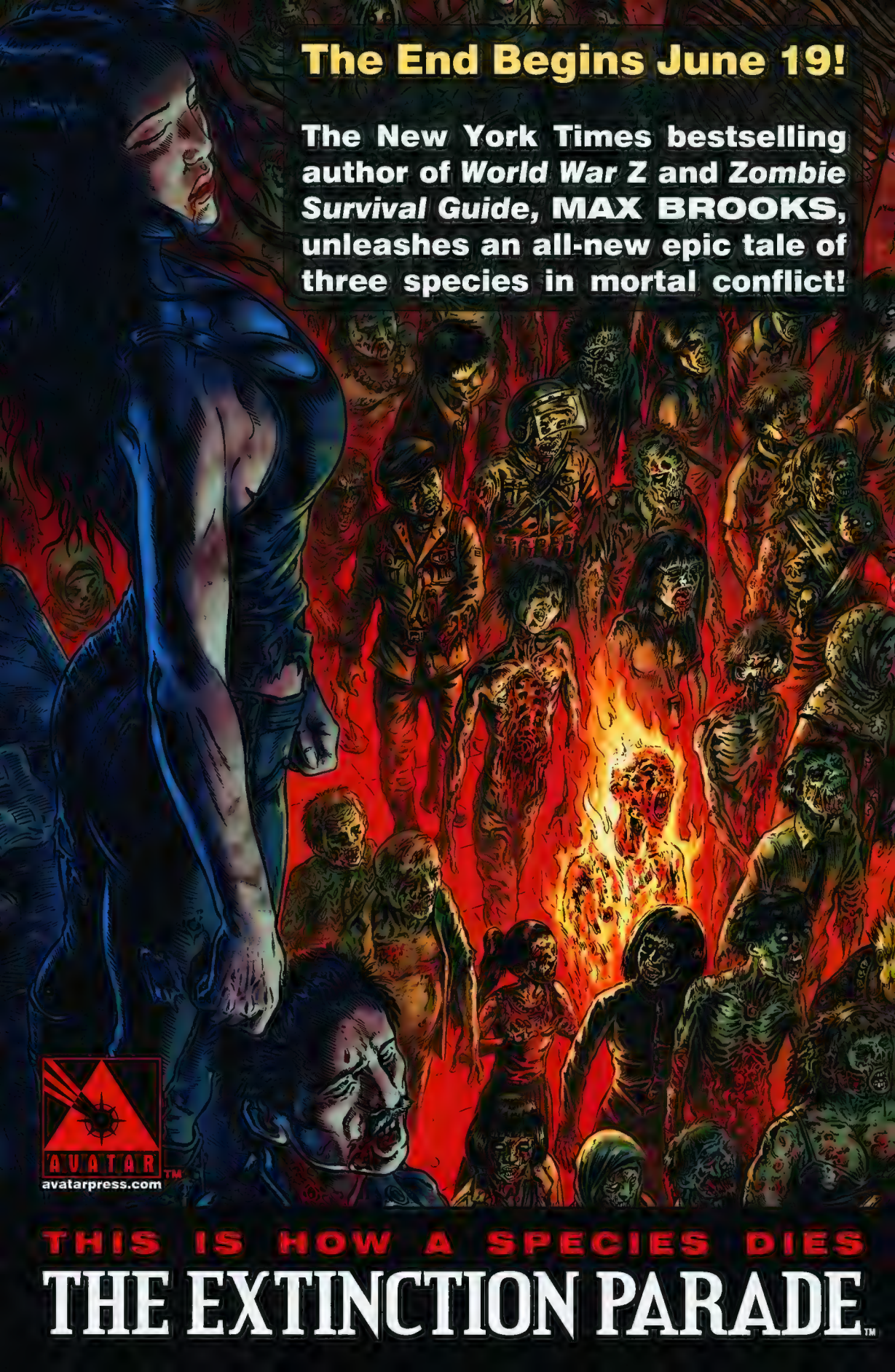
Natalie does not strap on the turkey carver and start throwing one liners out. Still, I liked everything about the sequence including the end result.

I give Lou Taylor Pucci a lot of credit for making this film fun. As Eric he took a beating that even made me flinch at times. But with a little duct tape and perseverance, he kept coming back for more.

And here is where the third act threw me. I don't want to give it away, but let's just say that "Necronomicon for Dummies"

has some new spells that will change the way the ending plays out. I have to admit that it had me on edge wondering how it would end.

There you have it, a run through look at the new *Evil Dead* flick from an old school horror fan. I enjoyed the movie for what it was. The popcorn was fresh and the gasps of disgust from the teens behind me was funny. I give the new *Evil Dead* four skulls out of a possible five. It wasn't "groovy" but it was "grueling," and that is what I had hoped for.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MIKE & LAURA ALLRED

MIKE MIGNOLA

MING DOYLE

NEAL ADAMS

RICHARD & WENDY PINI

SI SPURRIER

TARA STRONG

KRISTIN BAUER

RUTINA WESLEY

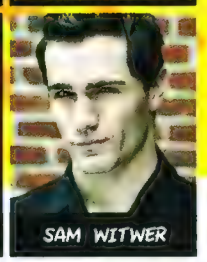
CHANDLER RIGGS

DANAI GURIRA

LAURIE HOLDEN

MICHAEL ROOKER

DEAN CAIN


SAM WITWER

VALIANT BOOM! STUDIOS ASPEN AVATAR BLEEDING COOL zenescope BDI McFARLANE TOYS

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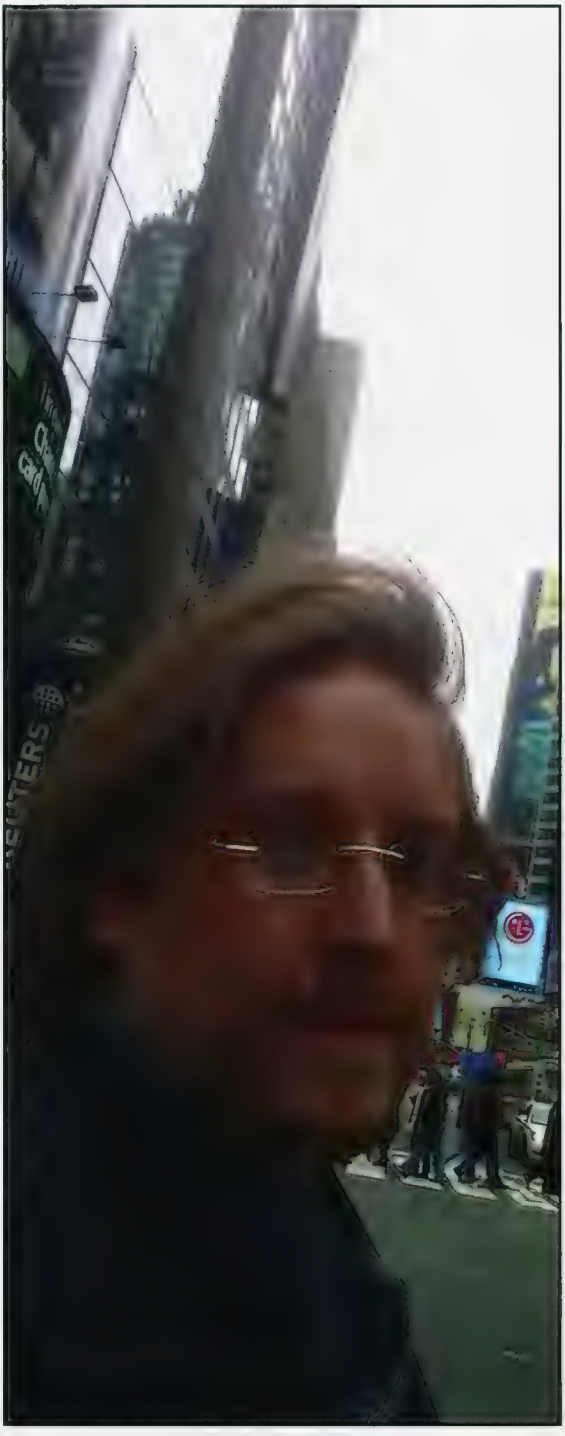
BLEEDING COOL FAN AWARDS 2013

by Rich Johnston

Welcome to the Bleeding Cool Fan Awards! Each year we try to create a fun environment that gives the fans a voice in determining who wins the awards for our colourful categories. That's right – no stuffy professionals or overseers making the picks – just categories and nominees for the best of the best in good and bad entertainment this year. Think of it as a healthy mix of respect and mockery that gives everyone a chance to enjoy the process and get in on the fun. There are categories that you will want to see your favourite creators win and some you'll hope they won't. At least publically...but in your heart of hearts you'll be rooting for anyway. And there's no waiting, we start nominating and giving awards for 2013 right now...take that Eisners!

This year we have a big list of twenty categories for folks to chew on and spit out your choices for. Some are quite serious and prestigious, like "best artist or writer." Others not so much, like "comic movie we hope wont suck" or "best feud of the year." All in all, we cover quite the gamut of topics as inspired by bleedingcool.com. And hey, a million readers can't be wrong, right? Consider this, I haven't been lynched yet by winners or losers of the various categories to date. I don't know about you, but I believe that is a personal win. But at a live show, you never know what will happen with yours truly hosting. Heckling? Fruits or vegetables thrown at the speaker? Inebriated winners falling off the stage? Who knows...this year you'll have to attend to see what unfolds in person as the awards are handed out.

Your votes will be compiled online, carefully tabulated, kept secure from prying eyes, and then announced in front of a gala audience at our gracious hosts, the Phoenix Comic Con. It will be the third annual event held at the ever growing and exciting venue and we're hoping even more of you will join us for the fun. You can find out more about the show, guests, and BC Fan Awards arrangements at their website– *http://www.phoenixcomicon.com/* – come on out and cheer on your favourites with the rest of your fellow fans.



Best Monthlyish Comic of 2013 So Far

- Saga
- Hawkeye
- Manhattan Projects
- All New X-Men
- Fatale
- Mind MGMT
- Revival
- The Walking Dead
- Chew
- I, Vampire

Best Kiddy Comic of 2013 So Far

- Adventure Time
- My Little Pony
- Superman Family Adventures
- Phoenix
- Crossed

Best Graphic Novel of 2013 So Far

- Nemo Heart of Ice
- The Man Who Laughs
- Hyrule Historia
- Montague Terrace
- The Murder Mile

Best Comics Writer of 2013 So Far

- Scott Snyder
- Brian Bendis
- Brian Wood
- Alex De Campi
- Matt Kindt
- Si Spurrier

Best Comics Artist of 2013 So Far

- Amanda Conner
- JH Williams III
- Skottie Young
- Jae Lee
- RM Guera
- Fiona Staples

Best Comics Publisher of 2013 So Far

- Image
- Marvel
- SelfMadeHero
- DC
- IDW
- Avatar. Yes, I know.

Best Digital Comic of 2013 So Far

- Atomic Robo: Two-Fisted Tales: Along Came A Tyrantula
- Scatterbrain
- Crossed: Wish You Were Here
- L'il Gotham
- The Private Eye
- Ashes
- Bandette

Most Anticipated Comic Event of 2013

- Sandman Zero
- Infinity
- Trinity War
- Marvel NOW Part Two
- Harbinger Wars

Title Launched Most Likely To Be Cancelled By The End of 2013

- Captain Marvel
- All Star Western
- Batwing
- Stormwatch
- Thunderbolts

Best Resignation/Firing of The Last 12 Months

- Gail Simone
- Josh Fialkov
- Andy Diggle
- Rob Liefeld
- Stephanie Brown From Smallville

Controversy of The Last 12 Months

- Orson Scott Card and Superman
- Josh Fialkov and John Stewart
- Saga Being Banned By ComiXology
- Before Watchmen
- Rick Remender, The M Word And Hobo's Piss

Best Sex In Comics of The Last 12 Months

- Saga
- Black Kiss II
- Sex
- Batwoman
- Amazing Spider-Man (Aunt May and Doc Ock flashback)

Best Feud of The Last 12 Months

- Jennifer De Guzman and Dirk Wood
- Scott Snyder and Rob Liefeld
- Mark Andrew Smith and David Brothers
- Steve Wacker Vs The Bleeding Cool Forum

Best Violence In Comics of The Last 12 Months

- Crossed Badlands
- Ferals
- Chew
- Batman Inc #8
- Luther Strode

Best Gimmick of The Last 12 Months

- Zero Issues
- WTF Covers
- 700 Free Digital Marvel Comics
- 54 Flag Covers For Justice League #1
- Skullkicker Number Ones

Event With The Most Disappointing Ending of The Last 12 Months

- Avengers Vs X-Men
- Death of The Family

Guiltiest Pleasure of The Last 12 Months

- Batman
- All New X-Men
- Bleeding Cool
- Rob Liefeld's Twitter
- Scott Lobdell's Three Or Four Books A Month

Comic Book-Based Film/TV Show of The Last Twelve Months We Could Bear To Recommend To Friends

- Walking Dead
- Iron Man 3
- Avengers
- Dark Knight Rises
- Arrow
- Dredd

The Comic Book-Based Film of 2013 We Are Most Hoping Won't Suck

- Man of Steel
- The Wolverine
- Snowpiercer
- Kick Ass 2
- Sin City A Dame To Kill For
- Thor The Dark World

Publication Most Likely To Need Defending By The CBLDF In The Rest of 2013

- Crossed
- Saga
- Sex
- Bleeding Cool

So place your bets, make your selections, and look forward to the Phoenix Comic Con for the Third Annual Bleeding Cool Fan Awards presentation. We hope it will have fewer drunken creators swearing in front of seven year old girls than last time.

LICENSE TO THRILL

An interview with IDW EIC – Chris Ryall

By *James Kuhoric*

LICENSE TO THRILL

by James Kuhoric

Everyone dreams big in comics. But IDW has taken the dream and turned it into an unprecedented success story, going from fledgling upstart to dominating publishing powerhouse. And they've done it with an impressive mix of licensed titles and original tales that have shown incredible insight into projects comic readers are craving. You know their faces from the *Previews* pages, but just who are the guys and gals behind the scenes that are targeting licenses like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Godzilla, Star Trek, Doctor Who,* and *My Little Pony*? How are they getting guys like Joe Hill, James O'Barr, Ashley Wood, R.A. Salvatore, Kevin Eastman, and John Byrne on new projects every month? And can they look into their crystal ball to tell us what the next big IDW books will be in 2013? We talked with Chris Ryall, the man driving the editorial steamroller and Editor-in-Chief of IDW, for an exclusive look at his favorite projects, creators, and what fans can look forward to this summer!

"Most of us know Chris Ryall as an international man of mystery, but for those who haven't met you, how would you describe yourself and your role at IDW?

I'm IDW's Chief Creative Officer and Editor-in-Chief. In simplest terms, that means I oversee the publishing here, but then it all breaks down into a variety of different duties – dealing with publishing plans and developing new projects and pursuing new licenses and working with creators and the editors to develop specific approaches for our books and doing interviews and all these other things. Which is why it's easiest to look at it in its simplest terms. Especially since things like figuring out our publishing schedule and which projects to pursue and all-of-that end aren't done solely by any one person. We're very much a cohesive team here, so I work with Ted Adams, IDWs co-founder/CEO, our COO Greg Goldstein, Special Projects Editor Scott Dunbier and the whole editorial team on all of this.

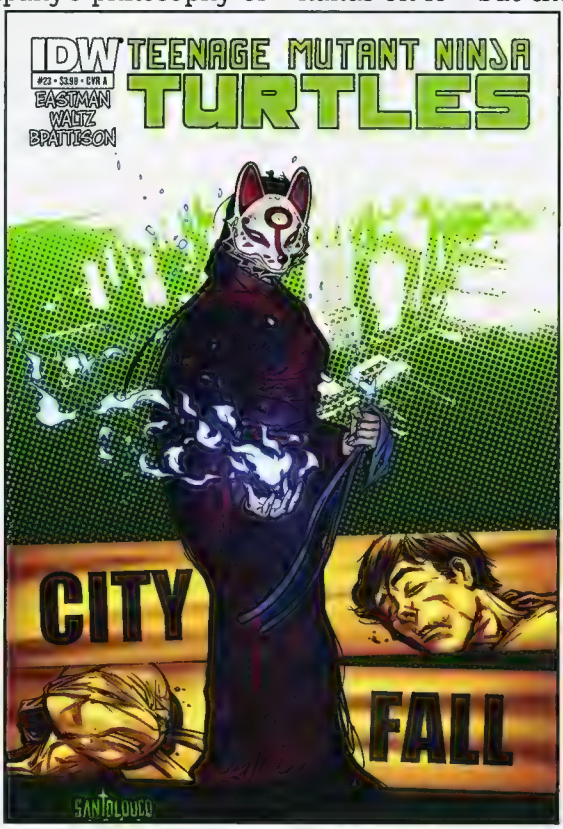
I joined up nearly nine years ago, after having previously worked as an advertising copywriter, a corporate speechwriter, a project director for Dick Clark, and in my spare time, running Kevin Smith's entertainment web portal.

You've been with IDW practically since the beginning. What has it been like to see the company evolve into the powerhouse publisher it has become?

It wasn't quite the beginning, but it feels that way... I started in mid-2004, a few days before Comic-Con (which is a helluva trial-by-fire for a first week. I was on the job two days and then suddenly I'm co-moderating a panel that Will Eisner is on; that's about the best "welcome to comics" I can think of). The company started publishing comics in 2002, so they were maybe 16-18 months in when I joined up, taking over for outgoing Editor-in-Chief Jeff Mariotte.

At the time, there were 6 or 7 of us, and we did under ten titles a month. As I'm typing this, I'm closing in on nine years with the company, there's about 40 of us on-site in San Diego now, and we publish over 50 books a month. It's been quite an evolution, but it's also been a pretty solid, steady amount of growth --we've never been the kind of place to take on more than we're capable of doing well.

I'm happy that many of the moves we've made have proven out, since at the time, going from being "the horror publisher" to changing the company by bringing on the *Transformers*, was a big leap and a considerable risk. But the company's philosophy of not charging in without thinking through the angles comes from Ted Adams, and that's exactly the kind of approach I've always favored, too. Calculated risks. So we've gotten to this point in what seems like rapid ascension to some people but seems more to me like slow, sustained growth that people are now noticing in a bigger way.



This is an odd industry in that people are so conscious of who publishes what and who they support. I was guilty of that, too – I was a Marvel kid growing up so it felt weird when I branched out to DC, First, and others. And it's been an ongoing process to change the dialogue for people, and even for Diamond, since it'd been twenty years since there were the anointed "big four" publishers of Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, and Image. For us to break into that group and take a firm number-four position has caught some people unawares, since it wasn't that long ago that we were the little publisher that could. We could, and then we did. It's been a fun first decade so far.

IDW HAS BUILT ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE LIBRARIES OF INNOVATIVE LICENSED COMICS EVER PUBLISHED. HOW HAVE YOU MANAGED TO SELECT AND TURN TITLES LIKE *TMNT* AND *MY LITTLE PONY* INTO SUCH CRITICAL SUCCESSES?

I'd love to say there was a formula we've followed – although if there were, I'd have to guard it with my life so Slugworth Publishing and the others couldn't get their hands on it – but the truth is, it's a combination of good ideas, good talent, and good luck. However, I think the thing that really makes it work more than even all of that is coming to it from a place of love and caring. No, really. When we sign on for any license, it's never the kind of thing where you can rationalize a bad one like "ehh, it'll suck but it'll be out of my life in a couple months." It's not like dating, it's like a marriage license.

What I mean is, if we sign on for the *Transformers* and none of us at the office have any affinity for it, well, that's a lot of years of faking it. The comics are years-long commitments and dollars, then there are the trade paperbacks, and for our accounting folk, they're likely in it for life. So we start every conversation about a license with "do we like it? Could we live with this one?"

People ask me at times what properties I would personally like to do here. There are always a couple that are unavailable (that part is more like dating) but for the most part, my answer is, look at what we publish. We publish it because we like it.

Beyond that, the initial conversations turn to "do we have a good take on this property? Do we understand it and its fans and the responsibility?" If you really pay attention to those things – I spent a lot of time lurking on Transformers message boards and Angel fan forums back in the early days, to really see what people liked and didn't like about those properties – then your intentions are pure, and fans respect that even if you fumble. And there will always be fumbling. We've gotten it wrong at times on many of our properties, but you course-correct, you try new things, you keep pushing to give fans what they want. We may not own the Ninja Turtles the way Marvel owns Spider-Man, but we love those little adopted reptiles like they're our own family, and we'll care for them and raise them like they're our own.

THE CREATIVE STABLE AT IDW IS FILLED WITH LEGENDARY WRITERS AND ILLUSTRATORS. HOW HAVE YOU MANAGED TO BRING THE LIKES OF JOE HILL INTO THE FOLD?

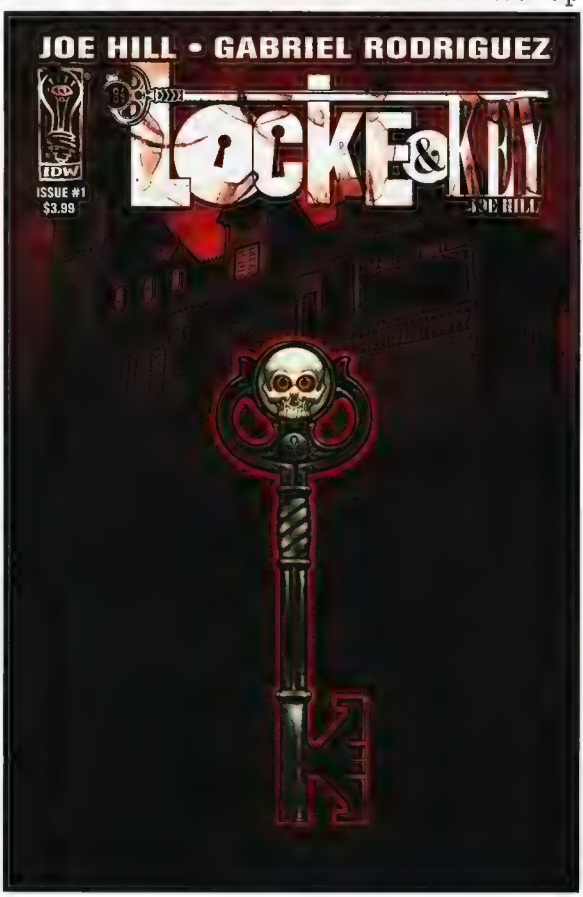
Ted Adams and I both read Joe's short-story collection, *20th Century Ghosts*. At the time, it was only published by a UK publisher, PS Publishing (who do a wild array of great books, short-story collections and the like). Ted loved it, I read it and felt the same – there was something about what Joe did in those stories that elevated them beyond the horror genre. They really felt Gaimanesque in their ability to make you feel things more strongly despite the fantastic or horrific goings-on, they had a unique and clever POV, and made Joe seem well-suited to write comics.

At the time, that was all we knew about Joe – he put words together in combinations that were pleasing to us. I contacted him about possibly adapting some of those stories to comics (I particularly loved "The Cape" and "Pop Art."). He did me one better by sending a few ideas for new series back my way. One of those was *Locke & Key*. The opening pitch read like this:

"Rendell Locke is dead: slaughtered in an apparent home invasion by a troubled kid named Sam Lesser and his moronic pal, Al Grubb. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the surviving members of the Locke family – Nina Locke, and her children, Tyler, Kinsey, and Bode – relocate to Lovecraft, Massachusetts, to take possession of the Locke family's ancestral home, a centuries-old

New England mansion called Keyhouse.

Soon, the Locke children discover that Keyhouse has a dizzying secret. Hidden with it are some very old, very dangerous keys… keys that can unlock secret doors with foreboding powers. There's a door that will turn a living child into a ghost. Another will reverse a person's gender, turning a boy into a girl, a girl into a boy. There's a key that will open a door into a tunnel of living shadows, and a key you can stick into a person's back to make them your wind-up slave. There's a key that will unlock almost any door, and open a passageway to anywhere in the world: unlock your bathroom and step through into Paris. There's a key to a closet filled with robes - a Chinese robe, an African robe - and by putting one on a child can change his race. And so on."



We loved it, and signed on for six issues. Joe assured me he could tell the whole story in six issues. Buuuuut if there were more space beyond, well, there was a bit more story to tell, too. And here we are, nearly six years later and edging up on the series' conclusion.

It seems amusing to think now that there was a time when Joe was just this unknown short-story writer (he'd also written a short Spider-Man story for Marvel that I never knew existed), but at the time we were prepping *Locke & Key #1*, that was still the case. Joe was going on a morning show at the time to talk up his first novel, *Heart-Shaped Box*. I recorded it to see if, you know, he could put a sentence together in person or only on paper, and that was when the reporter led off with "So, how's it feel to be Stephen King's son?" Leaving off the idiocy of the question itself, it was a fun little "oh, that's interesting" moment for us. It didn't change anything - we certainly didn't change any marketing materials to read "from Stephen King's son!" - but it was nice to see that Joe even then was doing his father so proud with his output.

And he does so more every year -- I read an advance of new *NOS4A2* novel at the start of this year, and it's spectacular. Really the book that should catapult him into the top echelon of writers. And he likes what he's doing, he loves comics, he takes a childlike joy in all of this stuff. So to me, the "how" Joe got working here isn't as important to me as just the fact that I'm glad it's all worked out that way.

I never thought we'd see a new *X-Files* comic book with Chris Carter participating in the editorial. How did you bring this storied series to IDW and what plans do you have to breathe new life into the adventures of Mulder and Scully?

We've had a long relationship with Fox, and this is one we've been talking about for a while. We had our first take of the property back when we did a crossover with Wildstorm on our *30 Days of Night/X-Files* book. It's a show I've always loved. I mean, you look at the comics I've written, things like *Groom Lake* and *The Colonized*, and you can tell that UFO-conspiracy stories are going to be right in my sweet spot.

I still had no idea this would all come together as well as it has, though. It was one thing to develop the pitch with a writer as good as Joe Harris, but then Fox set up a meeting with the Ten Thirteen people to discuss the overall plan. Ten Thirteen is Chris Carter's production company and I expected one of his people, but then at Fox, I'm riding up the elevator in the "Die Hard" building with a dapper silver-haired gent. We get off on the same floor, and head to the same meeting. He introduces himself as "Chris," and I get a quick "oh, shit!" moment. I mean, last time I saw pictures of Chris Carter, he had the longer surfer hair, and since I wasn't expecting him at all here, I just didn't make the connection until then.

So we sit down, and got along great. Chris, Ten Thirteen creative exec Gabe Rotter and I, along with the Fox folk, had a good initial chat about the property; Chris then says "okay, tell me your plan for Season 10." Which sounds simple enough, but the pressure of sitting across from Chris Carter and explaining what we had in mind for his characters... I was pretty dry-mouthed, I'll say that. But we talked about the plan, and Chris had some valuable thoughts and comments. He then took the plan and read through it more and agreed to sign on as our Executive Producer.

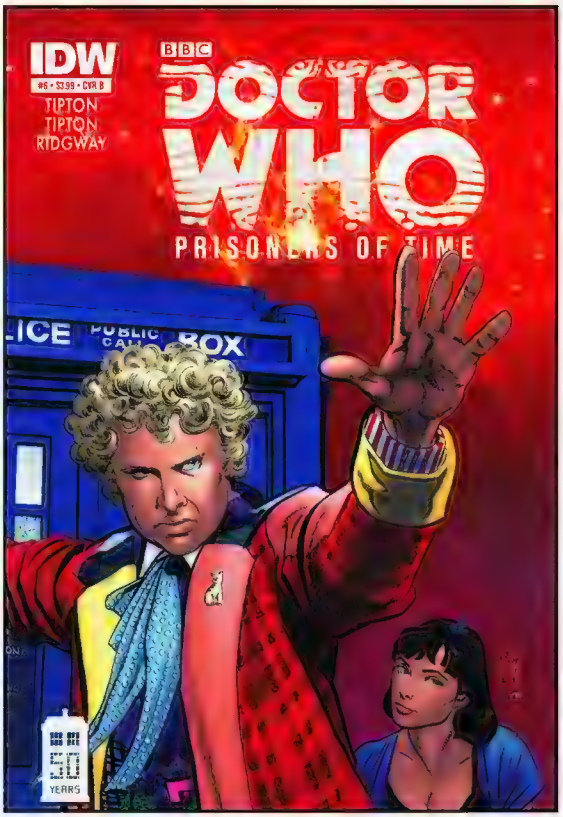
Joe Harris happened to be in LA a couple weeks later, so we all met at Ten Thirteen and really got into plotting out the season. Chris has really been wonderful to deal with, and of course had some great thoughts on where and how his characters should go. It made for an even stronger start and going forward with he and Joe, I'm really excited about our ability to recapture the feeling those early seasons gave me. We live in an even more paranoid era now than when the show started two decades ago, and it all makes the *X-Files* even more relevant in this post-Wikileaks time.

You've done what other American publishers have been unable to accomplish by making decidedly British titles like *Doctor Who* and *Judge Dredd* commercial successes in the States. How have you managed to keep their English sensibilities and get such a strong response from the US comic readers?

It's funny – when I was in London a year ago, I sat on this panel whose ostensible subject was "adapting projects for different markets." But what it really seemed to be

was a grilling session where other panelists and the attendees could rake me over the coals for thinking that us Americans could possibly do justice to Judge Dredd. It was pretty amusing. As I explained to them, our shows like *Arrested Development* play on the same wavelength as, say, Ricky Gervais or whatever other "British" form of humor that we're accused of not getting. We're not all a *Two and a Half Men* country over here. So I was never worried about capturing the feel of those shows/comics, since that kind of story and humor and sensibility has always been very similar to my own skewed take on the world. Rather, like with any property, finding writers who respond to and know the material and have something new to say, that was what drove us. And writers like Tony Lee (a Brit) or the Tipton brothers (Americans) on *Doctor Who* and Duane Swuerczynski (an American) or Matt Smith (the keeper of the Mega-City One keys, and a Brit) all nail the way I'd want these characters to be presented. Happily, fans feel the same.

I do understand the reticence, especially if those fans feel that for whatever reason, their beloved properties haven't been treated in the manner they expect ("Stallone-ing," it's called). But hopefully they trust the fact that we do really care about these properties and will take every step to produce the best comics we can. The specter of both properties looms large here, too – *Doctor Who* was the one show that got Geek-Americans to switch their TVs to UHF in the '70s just to catch the Fourth Doctor's adventures, and the early '80s Dredd reprints here, featuring stories by legendary creators such as Wagner and Bolland, set the bar high right from the start.



I will say, too, that as much as I liked this past summer's Dredd movie, I found it lacking any sort of good black British humor, which is the one thing that Dredd's world needs. It was a great action movie, but for a movie made by guys with "British sensibilities," well, I think a bit more Mega-City One lunacy might've helped it even more. I hope they get a chance to make a second one and continue to grow that world, since it really was a nice encapsulation of Dredd otherwise.

What is in store for IDW this summer? Are there any titles we should be on the lookout for as the next big breakout original or licensed books that are going to light the collecting world on fire?

There're a few creator-owned books I'm really excited about: Mike Raicht, Zach Howard and Nelson Daniel's *Wild Blue Yonder*, and Stephen Mooney's *Half Past Danger* are beautifully drawn adventure series that I'm proud to be publishing at IDW. Hopefully my own series *The Colonized*, with Drew Moss and Dave Sim (on covers) will have been well-received by the time this magazine hits, too. John Byrne also continues his run of new titles this year, following this spring's *Doomsday.1* with *Triple Helix*, set in his *Trio* superhero universe. These all follow series like *Fever Ridge* and more *Kill Shakespeare* as exciting, all-new properties in and around the more well-known things we do.

Along those same lines, as discussed above, *Locke & Key*, the series I'd be happy to publish with Joe and Gabriel and colorist Jay Fotos til the sun burns out, is wrapping its run this year. Joe's also got *Thumbprint* with us, and a comic that will tie in with his novel *NOS4A2* later this year as well.

These kinds of questions are hard for me since I want to name every single thing we publish, and every creator we work with. I know that would be tedious for the rest of the world, though, so I'll just say that I love the direction of our current licensed series like *Dredd, My Little Pony, Star Trek, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Ghostbusters, G.I. Joe, Transformers,* on and on... all of them are really in a great place right now. And hopefully only made even stronger when we launch *X-Files* and *T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents* this summer. Add to that more all-ages fare like *Kiss Kids* and the Cartoon Network and Jay Ward properties and we're in exactly the place I'd like us to be.

Beyond that, I could fill multiple pages raving about our *Artist's Editions* (coming this year: *Bone!*), our *Library of American Comics* (coming this summer: *Superman*!), and our *Yoe! Books* line (coming this summer, John Kricfalusi's *Spumco* book!). But I'd rather just end this with praise for the guys who run those lines: Scott Dunbier, Dean Mullaney, and Craig Yoe. They have help, of course – Dean and Craig are helped on their end by family, friends and others – but in the broader scheme of things, these three guys are not only amazing people to have on our team, but they're among the best comics archivists to ever produce beautiful books in this business. What they do, unearthing and re-presenting and otherwise lavishing time and care and attention on the many foundations of this industry, is pretty unparalleled and so utterly worthwhile. Every single one of their books is an object of beauty, and whenever new ones arrive here, they're the only thing that can derail the IDW machine for a few minutes while we all just drink in their beauty.

So it's guys like that who not only deserve every sort of industry award for the good they do, but they, and people like them on all sides at IDW, that make this exactly the kind of place I'm proud to work. Almost one decade in, I still feel like both IDW and I are just warming up.

CHEWING ON BUBBLEGUN

by James Kuhoric

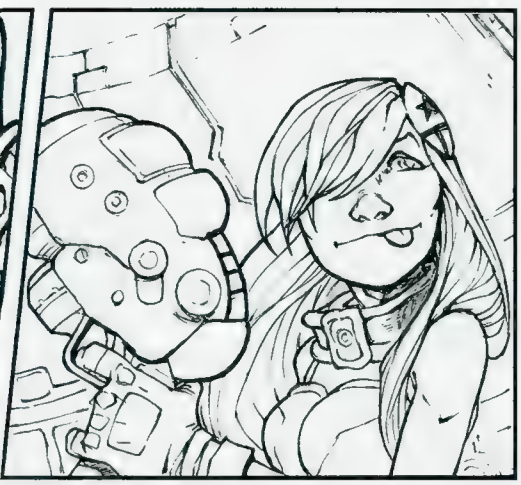
On the surface, *BubbleGun* looks a lot like its namesake - a colorful fun romping adventure that is sorta like bubblegum, a great distraction that provides a sugary splash on the taste buds. The vibrant colors, anime influenced art style, and cyber-sexy characters should be familiar to DC / *Ame-Comi* Girls fans. Mike Bowden's pencils pick up where he left off with the unique stylized art of *World of Warcraft* mixed with something similar to Pop Mhan's kinetic work on *Spyboy*. But Mark Roslan's story of *BubbleGun* is something altogether different. The story centers around two sisters – Molli and Devyn, who make up half of a team of cyber mercenary thieves. Together with their teammates, Roman and Kyo, they plan and execute cyber tech heists, liberating the technology for paying gigs and sometimes just for themselves. The team

is equipped with some fancy cybernetic weapons and suits, which set the stage for the series and give us some pretty entertaining visuals. The two sisters are strong female heroes cut from the Buffy Summers or Veronica Mars cloth – tough, flippant, and sexy women that set a great standard. In case you haven't noticed, this isn't your usual run of the mill sci-fi snatch and grab tale. These cyber thieves may be the best around but even they aren't prepared for what they stumble into during an anything but routine job. When they discover a mysterious package with contents that threaten to destroy them from within and send them hurtling into a world of espionage with the highest of stakes.

Spinning out of Aspen's yearlong "10 for 10" program, the premiere is easily sampled at a low $1.00 retail price. While it is easy to be lulled into believing this may be more style than substance based on the flashy and colorful covers, the creators do

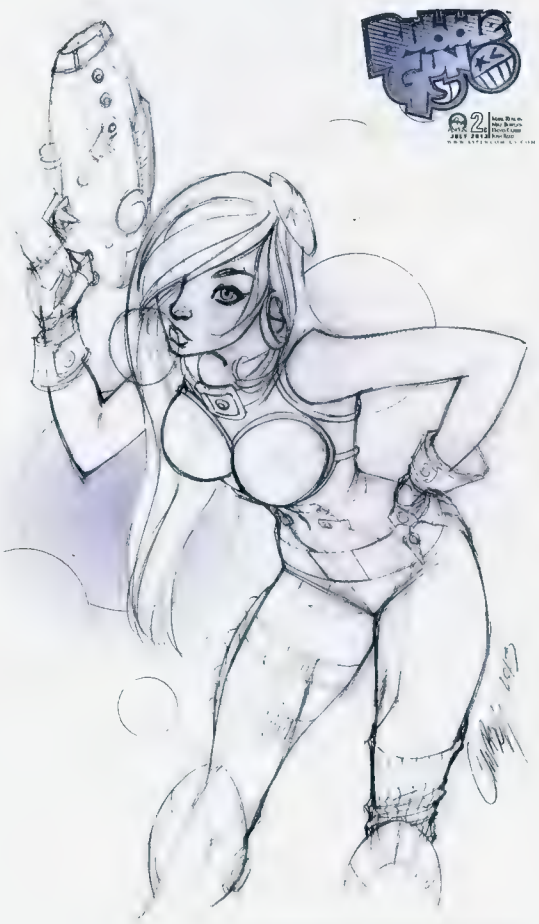
an incredible job of balancing the absurd with sci-fi action and quite a bit of story urgency. You are immediately immersed into the world of these characters and its Kirby-esque levels of futuristic technology. The action starts out strong and stays that way as we get to know both sisters. And the payoff doesn't end there. I found myself wanting to read the next issue, which now-a-days is an all-too unusual situation. In a world where we are hammered by new concepts and presentations every month, so very few have the legs to go further than an issue or two. But *BubbleGun* plants the seeds for a wild and romping adventure that is worthy of publisher Aspen Comics.

Michael Turner started something very special at Aspen ten years ago. Yes it was a home for his popular creations and concepts, but it was much more than that. It was a family, with creators and contributors all seeing a specific vision and running with it. Dare I say it was almost a "way of life."



Anyone who knew Mike could attest that he was an incredible artistic talent, but more than that, he was a very genuinely good hearted person. The smile he always had on his face was infectious and after even a brief conversation with him, you couldn't help but walk away with a matching grin. It's that attitude that lives on at Aspen, with the creators and in the characters they develop and publish. And when you pick up *BubbleGun*, you can't help but feel that same enthusiasm coming through the pages.

I can't promise that you will rate *BubbleGun* as your favorite Aspen comic book of all time, but I am pretty sure you will have that same genuine Michael Turner smile on your face when you finish reading it. It is a fun, exciting, and gorgeous romp through a bigger than life sci-fi world. And it has fewer calories than a pack of Big League Chew bubblegum.



LOVE, HATE, AND THE PULL LIST

by James Kuhoric

If you are reading this magazine, you must love comics. And one of the things about this hobby that makes it unique and fulfilling is the sense of excitement each new month brings. It is akin to the start of a new baseball or football season, when it doesn't matter how bad your favorite team was last year, because the new season is a time of optimism and infinite possibilities. Comics are like that, in that each month brings new and exciting prospects for books to come. And no matter how cynical, jaded, or flippant you want to be on the forums or with your pals, when that new *Previews Catalog* shows up in your shop, it's just a little bit like Christmas. These are a few of the upcoming May and June shipping books that I can't wait to unwrap under the pull list tree…

Superman Unchained #1

Ahh, super heroes. I am guilty as charged in that I love Marvel and DC supes as much as anyone, maybe even more than most. And if you have a pulse you should be joining me in really looking forward to Scott Snyder and Jim Lee on *Superman Unchained*. If you haven't been living under a rock, you know that Snyder has done for Batman comics what Christopher Nolan did for the films. And Jim Lee? Well he's Midas when it comes to comics, so I expect this to be nugget worthy indeed.

LOVE IT: The creative team to beat on one of DC's big three. **HATE IT:** $4.99 for 32 pages…c'mon man!

Honorable Mention (super heroes): *Batman/Superman #1* – Jae Lee's distinctive style on DC's big guns should be an awesome book.

X-Files: Season 10 #1

Wait…is it 1994 again? No, false alarm I'm afraid. But back in the mid-nineties *The X-Files* was the series to watch and the comic to collect. Sadly…the years were not kind to the franchise on television, in film, or in comics. But this is different, my flashback friends. Because IDW has shown that they know how to take beloved franchises, put the right creative team on them, and breathe new life into the husks left behind by the unkind years. Taking the same approach that gave *Angel* and *Buffy* new life in comics by continuing television series threads, this "season in print" is set to shake up the status quo and have us chasing conspiracies again. This is the book I am most looking forward to in June. Don't let me down, IDW… I want to believe.

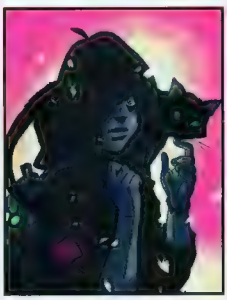
LOVE IT: IDW's creative vision and Chris Carter's involvement – this comic should be incredible. **HATE IT:** Dear IDW… see Topps Comics re: Ten Thirteen's involvement.

Honorable Mention (licensed comics): *Battlestar Galactica #1* – Abnett and Lanning writing with Alex Ross covers – I want this to be as incredible as it sounds. Please, Dynamite, give me chrome Cylons, awesome space ship dogfights, and a smiling, cigar chomping Starbuck!

Six-Gun Gorilla #1

Give me a chance to explain… Every so often I want comics that make me feel young again. Books that are so fresh, unusual, and creative that I smile the whole time I'm reading them. And honestly, just reading the solicitation for *Six-Gun Gorilla* and seeing the designs for it had me grinning ear-to-ear. We get Simon Spurrier, a fantastic and creative talent, telling a strange future tale about an old west gunslinging gorilla drawn by the artist of *Fraggle Rock*? This book could not be more awesome if it came with a voice chip allowing Neil Patrick Harris to read it to you. I'm a firm believer in always trying something new in comics and this is my "take a chance" book of the month.

LOVE IT: The creative aspects – the story, the visuals, the vibe – just emanates originality from start to finish. **HATE IT:** Going to be a real tightrope walk for this one to work – a push too far one way or the other and it could slide off into irrelevance.



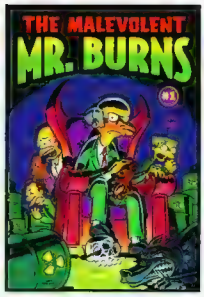
Honorable Mention (originality): *The True Lives of the Fabulous Killjoys #1* – Gerard Way has won me over. Everything he has done in comics has been fresh, enjoyable, and a distinctly fun read. I have no doubt this new *Killjoys* series will be as innovative as I'm imagining.

Extinction Parade #1:

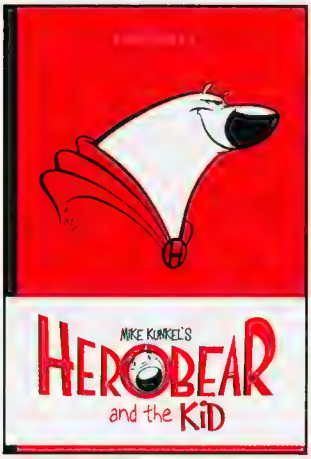
I'm a really harsh critic when it comes to horror. There have been books by big names in the industry that I've thought were trite piles of garbage where they've lived off their reputation instead of presenting a new concept. Max Brooks is a pedigree name…but how good is *Extinction Parade* going to be? Damn good. I got a sneak peek at the first four issues and they are some of the best horror comics I've ever read. Max's distinct voice provides for believable characters and an apocalyptic background that will have you sucked in and living a part of the zombie vs vampire vs human conflict. This is a New York Times bestseller done up for the comics' community. And it is going to be one of the best series of 2013.

LOVE IT: Refreshingly good horror spun by a master storyteller. **HATE IT:** Focus on the story not the gore. Pick your cover selection based on what you want in your collection.

Honorable Mention (horror comics) – *The Malevolent Mr. Burns #1* – D'oh! Sure I know it isn't "really scary horror," but Mr. Burns has been the stuff of nightmare for over twenty years. And this has the potential to be one of those classic fun Bongo romps into the absurd.



Those are the books I'm adding to my pull list. Here are a few others worthy of consideration:



Herobear and the Kid Special #1 – far too long in the making, welcome back Mike Kunkel and Herobear.

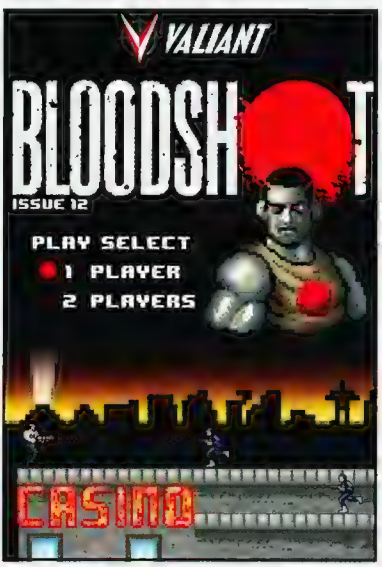
Spongebob Comics Annual Size Super Giant Swimtacular – Mermaid Man and Barnacle Boy, unite!

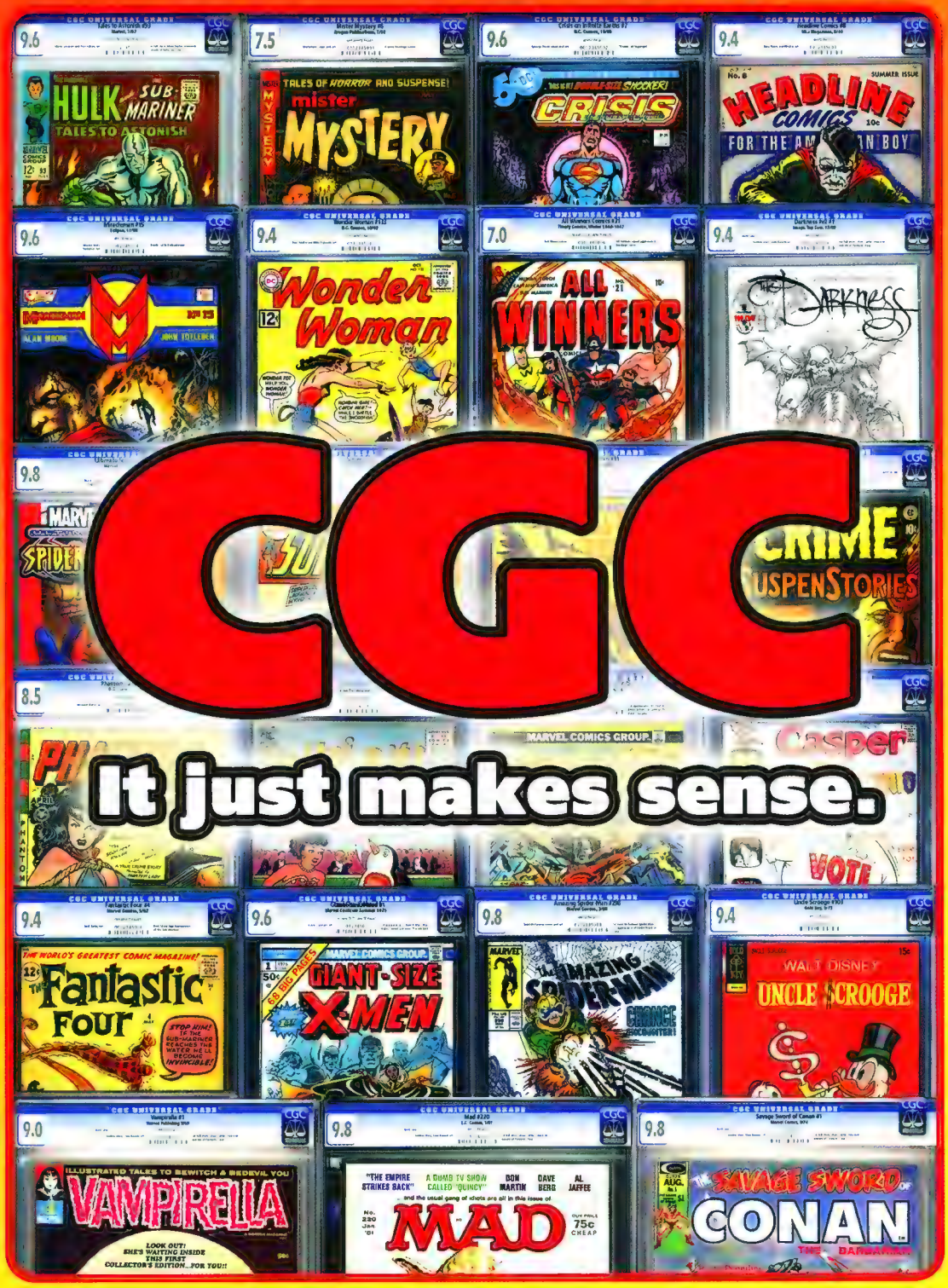
Age of Ultron #10 – When Joe Quesada says there is something so big and secret that he is drawing the final pages to keep it quiet, you know it will be BIG.

Lazarus #1 – A new Image comic by Greg Rucka = gold. Order two and sell one on eBay to pay for more comics.

Joe Hill's Thumprint #1 – Undisputedly one of the most creative horror writers in the world.

Valiant 8-Bit Covers – It's a gimmick, but a fun one for sure.





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VINTAGE PAPER CHASE

by Mark Seifert & William Christensen

There's nothing a vintage comic collector likes better than to see an obscure old comic given new importance by a film or tv show. It's all well and good when something like the first appearance of Iron Man in *Tales of Suspense* #39 gains greater appreciation through three hit *Iron Man* films and the character's star turn in *The Avengers* movie, but collectors have been seeking out that comic for decades.

It's another thing when something relatively obscure comes out of nowhere to gain the same sort of spotlight. In the last issue of *Bleeding Cool Magazine,* we mentioned *Tales to Astonish* #13, the first appearance of Groot, and that's exactly the kind of rise to fame we're talking about here. Pre-hero Marvel monster books are cool, but before last summer, absolutely no one predicted that Groot would be one of the stars of a major Marvel/Disney film release.

That doesn't mean we don't try to predict such climbs to stardom. Guessing what the next big thing will be is a large part of the fun (and potentially part of the profit) of collecting.

The Golden Age

Mystery Tales #40 is an interesting example of a very obscure book which came to wider attention several decades after its release. More specifically called an Atom Age comic by some collectors to denote that early-1950s era known for weird horror and sometimes even weirder radiation-inspired science fiction tales that served as a buffer between the heroic Golden and Silver Ages, this comic played a prominent role in a 2008 episode of the tv series *Lost.*

It's so obscure and hard to find that it often flies under the radar of both *Lost* fans and comic fans, but when both camps notice—look out. A fair condition copy recently sold for an eye-popping $1125, which might have been dismissed as an anomaly except that a vg copy was subsequent bid up to $4000 (as this issue goes to press, we note that the seller has relisted this copy). Though it can be hard to invest in a comic that is this ridiculously rare if you can't find a copy, it is indicative of that period between the heroic ages that is often overlooked by collectors & investors—and shouldn't be. More about that next time.

The Silver Age

The first appearance of the Phantom Zone and some of its villains—most importantly, General Zod—in *Adventure Comics* #283 is another comic that is enjoying renewed interest due to the character's prominent role in an upcoming mainstream film release. Though the details of the *Man of Steel* plot have been closely guarded, we do know that Zod will play an important part in the film. This comic is still very affordable at current market prices, with a CGC 7.0 having

STILL 10¢
APR. NO. 283
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
Adventure COMICS
featuring "The PHANTOM SUPERBOY!"
DON'T WORRY ABOUT SUPERBOY, MARTHA. OUR SON MUST BE SAFE WHEREVER HE IS! NOT EVEN THESE FORBIDDEN WEAPONS FROM KRYPTON COULD HAVE HAD ANY EFFECT ON HIM!
YOU'RE WRONG, DAD! ONE OF THEM PROJECTED ME INTO THE PHANTOM ZONE! GASP! THEY DON'T SEE ME... THEY DON'T FEEL ME! HOW CAN I TELL THEM I NO LONGER EXIST ON EARTH?

recently gone for $700, while a solid-looking raw fine condition copy went for $127 earlier in the year in what will likely turn out to be an excellent deal.

DC Silver Age keys have long lagged behind their Marvel counterparts in the minds and bank accounts of collectors, and there is constant debate as to whether those DC's—typically harder to get in high grade than Silver Age Marvels—will ever close the popularity gap. *Detective Comics* #359, the first appearance of the Barbara Gordon version of Batgirl, and a character who has enjoyed an extremely high level of popularity in recent times, is a prime example of a still-affordable Silver Age DC key. This issue has several of the ingredients that make for a nicely collectable Silver Age comic, such as a top-flight creative team in Gardner Fox and Carmine Infantino, and an eye-catching cover featuring the debut character. A CGC 9.2 copy recently went for $1400, while unslabbed vg-range copies can be had for around $150.

The Bronze Age

We've mentioned *Guardians of the Galaxy*-related comics several times in the early issues of *Bleeding Cool Magazine*, yet it still seems there's some new and noteworthy sale to remark on every issue. And this time it's very noteworthy indeed —the census-topping CGC 9.8 copy of *Marvel Preview* #7, the first appearance of Rocket Raccoon, has recently sold from retailer PNJ Comics for $2000. Another example of a comic that went from obscurity to the spotlight, this 1976 Marvel magazine was sitting around in back issue bins for a few dollars barely a year ago. Indeed, the owners of PNJ Comics, excited to have garnered a record sale for this rapidly-rising key, tell me they had this copy stored raw in a closet before recently submitting it to CGC for grading.

The Future Of Vintage Paper

There's still more to cover in the vintage market, so we'll be expanding coverage and starting an online companion to this column soon, and if you'd like to contribute info contact us at vintage-paper@bleeding-cool.com.

HOT COMICS = CA$H!

by Rich Johnston

The rule used to be, the first print is hot, and the second print is not. And for the most part that held, Todd McFarlane *Spider-Man #1* notwithstanding. After all, who wants a dirty smelly fourth print of a comic when you can have a shiny, bright, significant first print?

Except at some point, someone did realise that subsequent prints are generally going to be rarer than the first print. This is why there are some remarkable prices being asked for the New 52 *Batman #1* and *Detective Comics #1* third, fourth and fifth prints. We're starting to see the same happen to *Saga* as well...

With the news that Angela was to join the Marvel Universe, including appearances in *Age of Ultron* and *Guardians of the Galaxy*, *Spawn #9* has massively heated up. Selling in the dollar bins due to everyone having

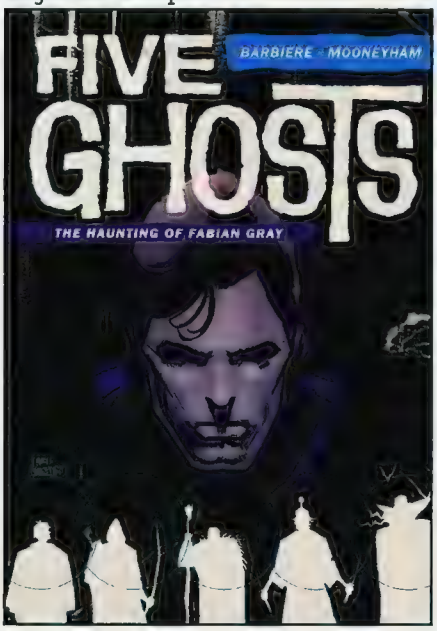
copies at one point, with a print run higher than *Walking Dead #100*, nevertheless this comic is by Neil Gaiman and Todd McFarlane with a Jim Lee poster, and features Angela's first appearance. It jumped overnight from selling for $2 on eBay if you were lucky, to being a $30 book. And the thing is, lots of people do have this comic in their long boxes, so you're encouraged to take a peek. And while you're there, look for *Angela #1-3* by Gaiman and Greg Capullo. Hmm, I'm sure he's up to something else as well these days, too.

The game right now seems to be to buy a copy of *Nowhere Men* if you can, go straight to eBay and flip it for cash. The book keeps selling out from many stores on a repeated basis, as writer Eric Stephenson and publisher of Image Comics has learned from all the hit books Image have put out over the years

and put them all to good use here. And while you're digging in those long boxes looking for those copies of *Angela*, why not keep an eye out for *Invincible #19*, which features their first appearance years ago, although creator Eric Stephenson says that doesn't count, and what really counts is the mention and appearance in the *Image Comics 2010 Yearbook*.

A similar game can be played with *Injustice Gods Among Us*. Many retailers seem to have under ordered this book, as it was a "digital first" title, published online weeks before it was put out in print. But so radical are the storylines, and so anticipated is the game it is spinning off from, that they have driven up demand to own the printed version.

Five Ghosts is the latest Image issue one to join the top ranks of instant sell-out, and a massive increase in demand leading to quite silly prices. Right now, as a speculator, my advice is to pick up every Image issue one you can. Losing money on those that don't go up in price will easily be offset by those that have. Kelly Sue DeConnick and Emma Rios' Western assassin series, *Pretty Deadly*, feels like a sure hit.



Kieron Gillen's new "super soldiers in World War II" title, *Uber*, has been on fire. *Uber #0* was an instant sell out at the distribution level and sent retailers and speculators out in groves to find the rare *Blitzkreig Black & White* covers. With copies selling on eBay for over $25 out of the gate, it's a safe bet that the heat will continue on all early issues of *Uber*. But here's a fancy tidbit for you, the hidden gem here may be *Uber #0 Propaganda* cover. If typical sales patterns hold for *Previews*, those are the lowest ordered copies of three standard editions.

Ban em if you got em. With the controversy over the digital editions of Image's *Sex #1* and *Saga #12* for naughtiness, there may be a spike in print copies getting bought up. Who knew... sex sells.

Dark Horse's creator owned titles are less as sure, but *Mind MGMT* has shown that the more esoteric rather than the big licensed names, can demand huge mark ups in the aftermarket. A bigger gamble here though.

One line of comics that are bound to be under ordered, are Viz Comics' kiddy licensed titles, *Hello Kitty*, *Ugly Dolls* and *Pokemon*. Launching on Free Comic Book Day, these may do a similar trick to *My Little Pony*, but will retailers realise in time? Gotta catch 'em all, after all.

Some feel that speculation damages the comics industry. And while it has in the past, that doesn't mean it will now. Indeed, speculation seems to reward and bring much-needed attention to certain titles that may have been ignored otherwise. Of course, do remember that the market price of comics can go down as well as up. Or stay the same. But generally the first one...

PRICE GUIDE

for Collectors and Sellers

Welcome to the Bleeding Cool Price Guide. This is a snippet of the kind of prices comics are selling for on the open market. Rich Johnston scoured the web and thousands of online auction listings to provide this snapshot of comic book sales. A price listed here is no guarantee you'll be able to sell yours for that price, but it might give you an idea of what someone, somewhere, is willing to pay! Retailers who would like to become part of an advisory board for the Price Guide feature should contact Jim Kuhoric via email: *jimkuhoric@bleedingcool.com*

The Death Of Damian Wayne

Batman Inc (2012)

0	$8.00
1	$4.00
2	$3.00
3	$12.00

4	$2.00
5	$9.00
6	$9.00
7	$11.00
8 (Death of Damian Wayne)	$31.00

Batgirl (2011)

18	$5.00

Batman (2011)

18	$4.00

batman And Robin (2011)

18	$15.00

Catwoman (2011)

18	$3.00

Detective Comics (2011)

18	$10.00

Nightwing (2011)

18	$5.00

Red Hood And the Outlaws (2011)

18	$7.00

World's Finest (2012)

10	$8.00

Angela Is Joining The Marvel Universe

Spawn

9	$25.00

Angela

1	$7.00
2	$9.00
3	$2.00

Angela Pirate Spawn Promo

0	$18.00

Some Image Comics Can't Stay On The Shelves... And Some Can

Five Ghosts

1	$10.00
1 ECCC	$107.00

East Of West

1	$10.00
1 Forbidden Planet	$26.00
1 Ghost	$15.00

Five Weapons

1	$10.00
2	$4.00

Happy

1	$13.00
1 Allred Variant	$10.00
1 Forbidden Planet	$13.00
1 MorrisonCon	$108.00
2	$6.00

2 Stewart Variant	$20.00
3	$4.00
3 Hughes Variant	$10.00
4	$4.00
4 Quitely Variant	$7.00

Lost Vegas

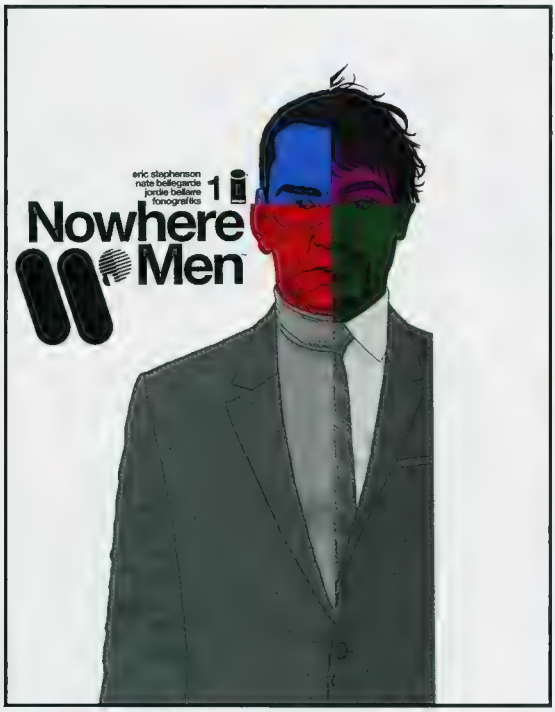
1 ECCC	$70.00

Nowhere Men

1	$80.00
1 2nd print	$18.00
1 3rd print	$6.00
1 4th print	$10.00
1 Thought Bubble	$170.00

Nowhere Men (cont.)

1 ComicsPRO	$122.00
1 Wizard World	$112.00
2	$22.00
2 2nd print	$10.00
2 3rd print	$5.00
3	$16.00
3 2nd print	$10.00
4	$6.00



Peter Panzerfaust

1	$350.00
1 2nd print	$40.00
2	$112.00
2 2nd print	$30.00
3	$36.00
4	$22.00
5	$20.00
6	$29.00
7	$25.00
8	$50.00
9	$30.00
10	$7.00
Green Wake 7 (First Peter Panzerfaust)	$30.00
Morning Glories 14 (First Peter Panzerfaust)	$30.00

Sex

1	$6.00
1 ECCC	$101.00
2	$3.00

Snapshot

1	$13.00
2	$3.00
Judge Dredd 322 (First Snapshot)	$23.00

Todd, The Ugliest Kid On Earth

1	$26.00
1 2nd print	$7.00
2	$9.00
3	$3.00

Dark Horse Hot Series

originals
No. 6
$3.99
MIND MGMT
matt kindt
"A 'mind-eff' . . . there is some really great stuff happening here, and Matt Kindt is phenomenal. I love him."
—BLAIR BUTLER, G4 TV

Mind MGMT

0	$9.00
1A	$70.00
1B	$77.00
2	$20.00
3	$8.00
4	$8.00
5	$8.00
6	$8.00
7	$5.00
8	$4.00
9	$4.00
3 Stories (First Mind MGMT)	$19.00

Si Spurrier's Hot Comics

Crossed: Badlands

19	$4.00
20	$4.00

Dark X-Men: The Beginning

3	$3.00

Nation X

1	$3.50

Wolverine Dangerous Games HC

	$9.00

X-Men: Blind Science

	$4.00

X-Men: Curse Of The Mutants

	$4.00

X-Men: Legacy

1	$12.00
2	$3.00

Mike Carey's Hot Comics

Lucifer TPBs

1	$10.00
2	$17.00
3	$20.00
4	$51.00
5	$20.00
6	$8.00

As The Kick Ass 2 Movie Is Upon Us...

Kick Ass

1	$37.00
1 Retailer	$45.00
1 Sketch	$34.00
1 Umpteenth	$6.00
2	$15.00
2 2nd print	$7.00
2 Umpteenth	$15.00
3	$20.00
4	$7.00
5	$7.00
6	$7.00
7	$7.00
8	$8.00

Kick Ass 2

1	$18.00
1 Tommy Lee	$15.00
1 Second Print	$9.00
1 Third Print	$5.00
1 Fourth Print	$5.00
2 Variant	$8.00
3	$4.00
4	$3.00
5	$3.00
5 Bryan Hitch	$9.00
5 Cosplay	$8.00
6	$3.00
6 Cosplay	$7.00
7	$5.00
7 Blank	$10.00

Hit Girl

1	$4.00
1 Sketch	$50.00
1 1:50 Phil Noto	$48.00
1 Blank	$35.00
1 B&W Variant	$40.00
1 Leandro Variant	$15.00

Hit Girl (cont.)

2	$3.00
2 (1:25) Romita Variant	$12.00
2 Johnson	$15.00
3 (1:25) Jock	$10.00
3	$3.00
3 (1:50) Romita	$18.00
4	$4.00
4 Sketch	$35.00
4 (1:25) Geof Darrow	$13.00
4 Second Print	$6.00
5	$5.00
5 (1:50) Romita Variant	$35.00
5 (1:25) Sienkiewicz	$14.00

Valiant... Then And Now

Archer And Armstrong (1996)

0 Gold	$50.00
26	$4.00

Archer And Armstrong (2012)

1	$4.00
1 Gold	$80.00
1 Neal Adams Variant	$38.00
1 David Aja Variant	$10.00
1 2nd Print	$5.00
2	$2.00
2 Patrick Zircher variant	$30.00
3 David Aja Variant	$5.00
4	$4.00
4 Variant	$4.00
5	$4.00
5 Emanuella Luppachino Variant	$52.00
6	$5.00
6 Patrick Zircher Variant	$15.00
7	$4.00
7 Henry Variant	$28.00
8	$4.00
8 Fowler Variant	$26.00

Bloodshot (1993)

0	$4.00
1	$4.00
6	$4.00
50	$13.00
51	$15.00

Bloodshot (1997)

1 Retailer Preview	$12.00

Bloodshot (2012)

1	$4.00
1 Lozzi Variant	$4.00
2 2nd print	$4.00
3 Ribic Variant	$37.00
7 Hairsine Cover	$15.00

Harbinger (1996)

0 Pink	$80.00
0	$4.00
1	$60.00
2	$10.00
3	$20.00
4	$18.00
5	$15.00
6	$10.00
7	$6.00
41	$5.00

Harbinger (2012)

0	$7.00
0 Larosa	$34.00
0 Gatefold	$38.00
1	$5.00
1 Braithwaite Variant	$20.00
1 Djurdjevic Variant	$60.00
1 Gold	$150.00
2 B&W	$5.00
2 Braithwaite Variant	$40.00
3 Zircher Variant	$25.00
4	$4.00
5 Aja Variant	$5.00
6 Matthew Clark Variant	$41.00
7	$4.00
7 Luppacchino Variant	$40.00
8	$4.00
8 Khari Evans Variant	$31.00
8 Jeff Lemire Variant	$115.00
9	$4.00
9 Variant	$6.00
10	$4.00
10 Variant	$4.00
11	$4.00
11 Zircher Variant	$22.00

Shadowman (1992)

0 Chromium	$17.00
1	$10.00
2	$6.00
19 (Aerosmith Appearance)	$4.00
37	$7.00
38-41	$4.00
42	$5.00
43	$8.00

Shadowman (1997)

4	$8.00
5	$10.00
20	$5.00

Shadowman Deadside

1	$20.00
2	$15.00

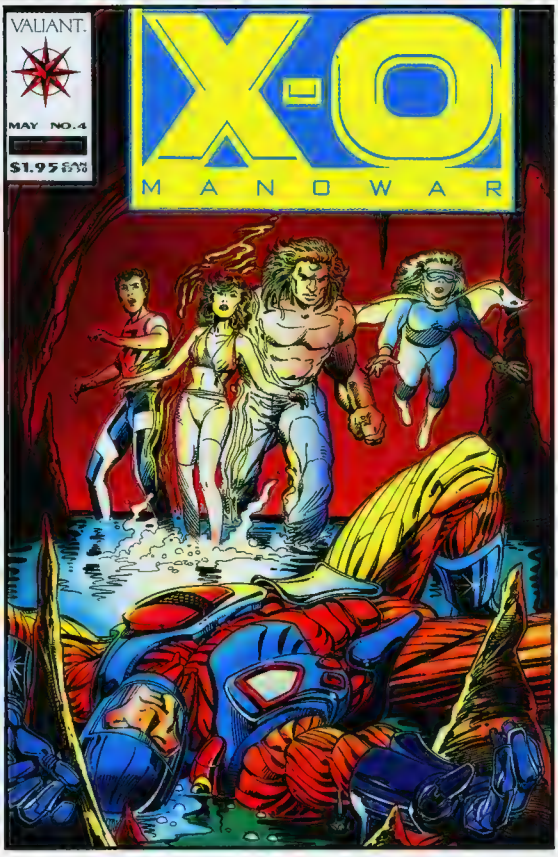
Shadowman (2012)

0 Black	$80.00
1	$4.00
1 Sienkiwicz cover	$30.00
1 Ashcan	$104.00
3 Johnson Cover	$23.00

X-0 Manowar (1992)

0 Gold	$8.00
½	$8.00
1	$15.00
2	$3.00

3	$3.00
4	$30.00
15 Pink	$3.00
44	$6.00
50	$5.00
51	$4.00
52	$6.00
53	$4.00
54	$6.00
55	$5.00
56	$6.00
57	$2.00



58	$4.00
59	$5.00
60	$4.00
61	$4.00
62	$4.00
63	$6.00
64	$5.00
65	$7.00
66	$9.00
67	$9.00
68	$25.00

X-O Manowar (2012)

FCBD	$5.00
1	$5.00
1 David Aja Variant	$18.00
1 Gold	$100.00
1 Nord Variant	$8.00
1 Sketch Flipbook Harbinger	$20.00
1 Talking	$60.00
1 2nd Print	$15.00
2 Lozzi Variant	$25.00
2	$4.00
3 Suyan Variant	$9.00
3 Variant	$18.00
4	$5.00
4 Don Kramer Variant	$12.00
5 (1:25) Sienkiewicz	$5.00
5 Ninjak Variant	$70.00
5 Patrick Zircher Variant	$16.00
5	$4.00
6	$4.00
6 Patrick Zircher Variant	$10.00
6 Character Design Varaint	$20.00
6 Second Print	$4.00
7	$4.00
8	$4.00
8 Hairsine Variant	$22.00
9	$4.00
9 Crain Variant	$18.00
9 Cary Nord Variant	$13.00
10	$4.00
10 Cary Nord Variant	$25.00
11	$4.00

11 Bart Sears Variant	$80.00
11 Rivera Variant	$22.00
12	$4.00
12 Doe Variant	$20.00

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Star Trek Select Spock Action Figure

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- Super Heroes In Training: Escondido, CA
- I.E. Comics And Games: Hemet, CA
- The Comic Bug: Manhattan Beach, CA
- Yesteryear Comics: San Diego, CA
- *Mile High Comics: Denver, CO*
- Rogue Comics: Bridgeport, CT
- The Comic Book Shop: Wilmington, DE
- The Core: Cedar Falls, IA
- *Graham Crackers: Chicago, IL*
- G-Mart: Chicago, IL
- Alley Cat Comics: Chicago, IL
- Amazing Fantasy Comic Shop: Frankfort, IL
- Have Fun Collectibles: Moline, IL
- Beyond Tomorrow: Palatine, IL
- *Discount Comic Book Service: Fort Wayne, IN*
- Creative Comics: Griffith, IN
- Prairie Dog Comics: Wichita, KS
- Technical Video Rental Inc: Arlington, MA
- Friendly Neighborhood Comics: Bellingham, MA
- *Newbury Comics: Brighton, MA*
- Larry's Comics: Lowell, MA
- Harrison's Comics & Pop Culture: Woburn, MA
- *Third Eye Comics: Annapolis, MD*
- *Alternate Worlds: Cockeysville, MD*
- Comics To Astonish: Columbia, MD
- *Collectors Corner: Parkville, MD*
- Big Ben's Comix Oasis: Allen Park, MI
- A-z Cards & Comics: Garden City, MI
- Source Comics & Games: Roseville, MN
- Rock Bottom Books: Columbia, MO
- Newcastle Comics & Games: Maryland Hgts, MO
- Fantasy Shop: St Charles, MO
- Mail Order Comics Inc: Omaha, NE
- Krypton Comics: Omaha, NE
- Main Street Hobbies Inc: Milltown, NJ
- A & S Comics: North Bergen, NJ
- Astro Zombies: Albuquerque, NM
- Blu Planet Comics & Games: Massapequa, NY
- *Midtown Comics: New York, NY*
- All Heroes Comics: Rochester, NY
- Alterniverse: Salt Point, NY
- Fourth World Comics: Smithtown, NY
- Rockin' Rooster: Cincinnati, OH
- Suds Media: Cleveland, OH
- Rupps Comics: Fremont, OH
- New Dimension Comics: Mentor, OH
- Moore Comics: Westerville, OH
- Things From Another World: Milwaukie, OR
- Tm Cards: Allentown, PA
- Phantom Of The Attic: Easton, PA
- Comic Collection: Feasterville, PA
- Bell's Comics & Trading Cards: Grove City, PA
- New Dimension Comics: McMurray, PA
- Ontario Flea Market: Philadelphia, PA
- America's Most Wanted Collectibles: Williamsport, PA
- Metro Comics: Guaynabo, PR
- Apocalypse Comics: N Myrtle Beach, SC
- Soundwave Music Comics & More: Summerville, SC
- *Lone Star: Arlington, TX*
- Night Flight Comics: Salt Lake City, UT
- Atlas Comics: Charlottesville, VA
- Untamed Worlds: Lynchburg, VA
- Four Color Fantasies: Winchester, VA
- Painted Visions Comics & Cards: Woodbridge, VA
- Docking Bay 93: Mt Vernon, WA
- The Westfield Company: Middleton, WI

Canada

- Baby Love Products: Grand Prairie, AB
- The Beguiling: Toronto, ON
- Red Nails II: North York, ON
- Jacks on Queen: Elmvale, ON
- Distribution Universe: St. Laurent, QC

United Kingdom

- A Place In Space: Surrey
- *Forbidden Planet Int'l: Glasgow*
- Gosh! The London Comic Shop: Soho, London
- Orbital Comics Ltd: London
- Planet Ace Ltd T/A Ace Comics: Colchester
- Whatever Comics: Canterbury, Kent

International

- Kings Corporation Pty Ltd: Sydney, NSW, AU

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